



Vascular Ultrasound

How to prepare for your exam

Vascular ultrasound exams are used to detect problems with blood flow. Read this handout to learn how to prepare for the exam, how the exam works, how the exam is performed, what you will feel during the exam, and how to get your results.

What is vascular ultrasound imaging?

Ultrasound or sonography sends sound waves through the body. When the sound waves bounce off the organs, they create an image of the inside of your body. X-rays are not involved in ultrasound exams.

An ultrasound picture is a way to check the body's blood flow. Ultrasound pictures are captured in real-time, so doctors can observe the blood flow to organs and tissues throughout the body, and check the status of a repair, such as after arterial bypass surgery. With ultrasound, doctors can locate and identify blockages (stenosis) and problems like blood clots, plaque or emboli, and plan effective treatment.

How does the exam work?

Ultrasound sends sound waves into the body using a transducer, a hand-held device that sends and receives sound waves. After gel is applied to the skin, the technologist presses the device against the skin to obtain pictures, which then appear on a screen. As the sound waves echo from the body's fluids and tissues, an image is formed.

How should I prepare for the exam?

- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes for your exam. No other preparation is required.
- If your abdominal vessels are being studied, you will need to fast for 8 to 12 hours before the exam.

Questions?

Call 206-598-4449

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Vascular Services:
206-598-4449

How is the exam performed?

1. You will be placed on an exam table that can tilt and move.
2. A clear gel is applied to the area that will be studied. The gel helps the transducer make contact.
3. The technologist then presses the transducer firmly against the skin and sweeps along the target area, looking at the pictures on the screen and capturing snapshots as needed. For venous ultrasound exams, the transducer is pressed gently on the leg.
4. When the exam is complete, you may be asked to dress and wait while the pictures are reviewed. Often the technologist can review the pictures as they are taken, and you can be released right away.

What will I feel during the exam?

- Most ultrasound studies are fast and easy.
- You will feel the technologist spread some gel on your skin and then press the transducer firmly against your body, moving it until the right pictures are captured.
- Most exams take about 1 hour. More involved exams may take longer.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A vascular technologist, experienced in vascular ultrasound, will review the pictures and give you initial results. The technologist will then send the initial results to the vascular surgeon, who completes the report. You will receive the final results of the exam from the doctor who ordered the study.

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