

Pelvic ultrasound - abdominal

Definition

A pelvic (transabdominal) ultrasound is an imaging test. It is used to examine organs in the pelvis.

Alternative Names

Ultrasound pelvis; Pelvic ultrasonography; Pelvic sonography; Pelvic scan; Lower abdomen ultrasound; Gynecologic ultrasound; Transabdominal ultrasound

How the Test is Performed

During the procedure, you will lie on your back on the table. Your health care provider will apply a clear gel on your abdomen.

Your provider will place a probe (transducer), over the gel, rubbing back and forth across your belly:

- The probe sends out sound waves, which go through the gel and reflect off body structures. A computer receives these waves and uses them to create a picture.
- Your provider can see the picture on a TV monitor.

Depending on the reason for the test, women also may have a transvaginal ultrasound during the same visit.

How to Prepare for the Test

A pelvic ultrasound may be done with a full bladder. Having a full bladder can help with looking at organs, such as the womb (uterus), within your pelvis. You may be asked to drink a few glasses of water to fill your bladder. You should wait until after the test to urinate.

How the Test will Feel

The test is painless and easy to tolerate. The conducting gel may feel a little cold and wet.

Why the Test is Performed

A pelvic ultrasound is used during pregnancy to check the baby.

A pelvic ultrasound also may be done for the following:

- Cysts, fibroid tumors, or other growths or masses in the pelvis found when your doctor examines you
- Bladder growths or other problems
- Kidney stones
- Pelvic inflammatory disease, an infection of a woman's uterus, ovaries, or tubes
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding
- Menstrual problems
- Problems becoming pregnant (infertility)
- Normal pregnancy
- Ectopic pregnancy, a pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus
- Pelvic pain

Pelvic ultrasound is also used during a biopsy to help guide the needle.

Normal Results

The pelvic structures or fetus are normal.

What Abnormal Results Mean

An abnormal result may be due to many conditions. Some problems that may be seen include:

- Abscess in the ovaries, fallopian tubes, or pelvis
- Birth defects of the womb or vagina
- Cancers of the bladder, cervix, uterus, ovaries, vagina, and other pelvic structures
- Growths in or around the uterus and ovaries (such as cysts or fibroids)
- Twisting of the ovaries
- Enlarged lymph nodes

Risks

There are no known harmful effects of pelvic ultrasound. Unlike x-rays, there is no radiation exposure with this test.

References

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Reviewed By: John D. Jacobson, MD, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Loma Linda University School of Medicine, Loma Linda Center for Fertility, Loma Linda, CA. Also reviewed by David Zieve, MD, MHA, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.