Pelvic ultrasound

Patient Information Series – What you should know, what you should ask.

What is Pelvic ultrasound?

Pelvic ultrasound examination is a non-invasive diagnostic test that allows visualization of the reproductive organs such as the womb and ovaries. The machine uses a transducer (probe) that is either applied to the skin of your abdomen or inserted into your vagina after the application of a thin layer of coupling gel to aid the transmission of the ultrasound waves. The probe sends out ultrasound waves at a frequency that is higher than the human ear can hear that are reflected off your pelvic organs and returned to the transducer. These returning ultrasound waves are analyzed by the machine to produce images of your pelvic organs on the ultrasound machine monitor.

Is Pelvic Ultrasound Painful?

No. A pelvic ultrasound scan uses a transducer to send and receive high frequency ultrasound waves to and from your pelvic organs which do not generate any perceptible heat or vibration, and without exposure to radiation. However, sometimes probe manipulation and pressure, especially the vaginal probe, may cause some discomfort. This discomfort is usually mild and does not require the exam to stop abruptly but may be more severe in patients that have pelvic pathology such as endometriosis or pelvic adhesions.

Why is pelvic ultrasound important in evaluation of my fertility?

A pelvic ultrasound can help evaluate the size, shape and position of your reproductive organs especially the uterus (womb), the endometrium (lining of the womb), the cervix (neck of the womb), ovaries as well as other related pelvic organs such as your urinary bladder. It can also assess the blood flow in the various pelvic organs.

What kind of abnormalities can a pelvic ultrasound detect?

The pelvic ultrasound scan can detect abnormalities in the uterus such as uterine fibroids. Fibroids are benign tumors that are found in many women and usually don't cause any problems. Sometimes if they are very large or close to the lining of the womb (endometrium) they may affect your chances of conceiving. The scan can also detect abnormalities in the ovary such as ovarian cysts and help assess your ovarian follicular reserve and function by counting the small follicles produced by your ovaries during your menstrual cycle. It can also detect the presence of pelvic adhesions that may influence the patency of your fallopian tubes (oviducts).

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