Ultrasound Procedure

Your caregiver has ordered an ultrasound. This is a diagnostic procedure that uses high frequency sound waves. This is not the same as x-rays that use radiation. You will not feel the sound waves. These sound waves (echoes) bounce back from the internal organs to a hand held receiver (transducer) that the technician holds against your body. These echoes contain information that is changed into an image of the area being examined. Permanent pictures are then made with a camera attached to the ultrasound machine.

PROCEDURE

The procedure is simple and painless. The technician will have you lay on your side or back and pass the transducer over the area to be examined. A gel is applied to the area under the transducer to help conduction of the sound waves. After the necessary pictures have been taken they will be given to a *radiologist* for interpretation. A radiologist is a physician who specializes in the reading of x-rays and ultrasound. Sometimes the radiologist may do some of the scanning during your procedure if there is an area he wants to look at more closely. The entire procedure takes about an hour.

TYPES OF ULTRASOUND EXAMINATIONS AND PREPARATIONS

- **GALL BLADDER, LIVER, AND PANCREAS:** Fat free diet for 24 hours before the exam. Nothing to eat or drink for 12 hours prior to exam. Exam can show gallstones, masses, cysts, *inflammation* (soreness), infection and organ enlargement.
- **KIDNEYS:** No carbonated beverages or gaseous food should be eaten for at least 12 hours prior to exam. Nothing to eat or drink for 3 hours prior to exam. Exam can show cysts, masses, enlargement of ureters, stones and kidney size and shape.
- **AORTIC ULTRASOUND:** No Carbonated beverages or gaseous food should be eaten for at least 12 hours prior to exam. Nothing to eat or drink for 3 hours prior to exam. Exam shows *aneurysms* (an enlargement of the artery) and masses.
- **PELVIC AND OBSTETRICAL ULTRASOUND:** You may have to drink a lot of liquid before the exam. A full bladder helps to see the organs behind the bladder. This exam shows the *uterus* (womb), ovaries, and cysts or masses. The Obstetrical exam shows the position of the fetus, measurements for maturity, fetal heart beat, and fetal organs.
- **CAROTID ULTRASOUND:** No preparation is needed. This exam will show if there is blockage (*atherosclerosis*) of these large arteries in the neck that supply most of the blood to the brain.
- **BREAST, THYROID, AND TESTICULAR ULTRASOUND:** No preparation is required. This exam will show if a nodule is solid or cystic.

RESULTS

The radiologist will send your caregiver a report when the test is finished. Consult your caregiver for your ultrasound reports. **Remember it is your responsibility to obtain your results. Do not assume that everything is normal simply because you have not heard from your caregiver.**

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