

What is a fetal anatomy scan?

Most women will have a healthy baby, but there can sometimes be problems with development in babies. An anatomy scan is an ultrasound scan of your baby to assess if the baby is growing and developing normally.

Are there any risks?

Ultrasound uses sound waves to take pictures of the baby. There is no radiation exposure and no known risk with this type of test.

When is it done?

The anatomy scan is usually performed from 18 – 20 weeks gestational age, preferably at 19 weeks.

How is it performed?

The test is done in a private room while the mother is lying on a bed. The lighting will be dimmed.

It takes approximately 30 minutes. The sonographer will put some gel over the mother's lower abdomen. The sonographer will move the ultrasound probe over the abdomen to take many different pictures of the baby.

It is fine for a family member to stay in the room during the test however it is preferable not to bring small children to the

examination as they get bored quickly and may become disruptive.

What information is gained from the anatomy scan?

Your baby will be measured to see if it is growing properly and carefully checked to make sure it appears structurally normal.

Your baby's head, face, spine, heart, abdomen and limbs will be assessed carefully to look for any problems.

The fluid around your baby and the placenta will be looked at as well.

You may request to find out the gender of the baby at this time. Sometimes because of the babies position we may not be able to see. If you don't want to know we won't tell you.

If a problem is found with your baby or it is lying in a difficult position then the examination may be extended and could take longer. This will be discussed with you at the time.

Limitations of the examination

Some conditions are not able to be seen with ultrasound. This may be because the condition develops over time as the pregnancy progresses or after the baby is born or it may be that the condition is just not visible with ultrasound. Ultrasound can check that your baby appears structurally normal (normally formed) but it can not see problems with how your baby

functions. This is not meant to alarm you but just so you are aware that there are limitations to the scan.

For these reasons, if the ultrasound is normal your baby should still have the usual postnatal baby checks carried out by your midwife, paediatrician or obstetric caregiver.

Due to baby's position or the mother's build not all structures may be visible at the time of the examination or the visibility may be reduced. If the sonographer is not confident that all major structures have been adequately seen, you may be requested to wait for 30 minutes to see if baby will move or you may be requested to return for a repeat assessment on another day.

Results

The results of the examination will be discussed with you at the completion of the examination. A written report is also sent to the referring doctor and midwife. You should discuss the results with the midwife or doctor who referred you since the results often need to be interpreted in the light of other tests or clinical information which might only be clear to the person looking after the pregnancy.

Questions

Ask and we will try to answer them. Sometimes it may be difficult to talk to you during the study when the sonographer

may need to concentrate on obtaining all the information necessary. We are always happy to answer your questions at the completion of the examination

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