

What is a fetal anatomy scan?

Results

The results of the scan will be discussed with you at the end of the examination. A written report is also sent to your 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, and this might only be clear to the person looking after your 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 getting all the information needed. We are always happy to answer your questions at the end of the examination.

The Auckland DHB National Women's Health website has information:
nationalwomenshealth.adhb.govt.nz

Tena koutou katoa, Kia orana,
Talofa lava, Malo e lelei,
Fakaalofa lahi atu, Taloha Ni,
Ni Sa Bula Vinaka,
Greetings and Welcome

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, ideally at 19 weeks.

How is it performed?

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

It takes around 30 minutes. The sonographer will put some gel over your lower stomach (abdomen). The sonographer will move the ultrasound probe over your 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 better not to bring small children to the test.

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 looked at 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 baby's 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, we may spend more time examining you. We will talk to you about this 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 continues 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't see problems with how your baby functions. This is not meant to scare 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.

The baby's position or your build at the time of the scan will affect how visible all the structures are at the time of the scan. If the sonographer is not confident that all important structures have been seen clearly enough, you may be asked to wait for 30 minutes to see if baby will move, or you may be asked to come back for a repeat scan on another day.