

Patient & Family Guide  
2026

# Obstetric Ultrasound

**Yarmouth Regional  
Hospital**

# **Obstetric Ultrasound**

An obstetric ultrasound uses sound waves to take images of a baby while it is inside your uterus (womb).

You will likely not be able to see the screen during the exam. This is because of how the ultrasound machine is built.

## **What is an obstetric ultrasound?**

Obstetric ultrasounds may be done at 3 times during your pregnancy:

- 1. Dating ultrasound: 1<sup>st</sup> trimester**
  - This appointment takes about 30 minutes.
  - You will not be able to see the ultrasound screen.
  - Support persons are not allowed in the exam room.

## 2. **Comprehensive (also called routine) ultrasound: 18 to 20 weeks**

- This appointment takes about 60 minutes (1 hour).
- The technologist (person doing the ultrasound) will measure the baby's growth and do a full check of their anatomy (body).
- Support persons are not allowed in the exam room during the exam.
- After the exam, you may choose to have your support persons (including children) come into the exam room to see images of the baby.
  - › **We encourage you and your support persons to see the images of the baby at this appointment, as they will not be able to do this at ultrasounds later in your pregnancy.**

### 3. **Recheck ultrasound: 21 weeks or more**

- The technician will measure the baby's growth and do a limited check of their anatomy.
- During your appointment, you may also have:
  - › An umbilical cord doppler exam to check blood flow to your baby.
  - › A biophysical profile study to check your baby more closely. This checks their heart beat, breathing, muscle tone, and how much amniotic fluid surrounds them.
- You will not be able to see the ultrasound screen.
- Support persons are not allowed in the exam room during the exam.
- This appointment takes about 30 minutes.

## How is an obstetric ultrasound done?

- The ultrasound scan is done by a registered ultrasound technologist (called a **sonographer**).
- The images are reported by a **radiologist** (an X-ray doctor).
- You may also need a **transvaginal ultrasound** during the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester.
  - › This is done using a special ultrasound probe which is put inside the vagina to get a more detailed image.

## How do I get ready for my appointment?

- **Your bladder must be full for your appointment** if you are having:
  - › Growth measurements taken
  - › The placenta position checked
- You **do not** need a full bladder if you are having:
  - › A biophysical profile
  - › An ultrasound to check the baby's position
- **To make sure your bladder is full:**
  - › Drink 750 ml (3 cups) of fluids (like water, tea, coffee, pop) 45 minutes before your appointment time.

- **If you are in pain, your bladder is too full.** To help with this:
  - › Ask diagnostic imaging staff for a cup.
  - › Pee into the cup until it is 250 ml (1 cup) full.
- Arrive 20 minutes before your appointment time. When you arrive, register at the Diagnostic Imaging (X-ray) reception desk.
- **Do not** wear scented products. Nova Scotia Health is scent-free.

## How do I get my ultrasound exam results?

- The doctor caring for you during your pregnancy will get a written report in about 7 days (1 week). They will give you your results.

**Technologists are not allowed to give patients their results.** Please do not ask them for your results.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you are not able to keep your appointment, please call the booking office:

- › Phone (toll-free): 1800-742-2571

## Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:  
[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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