

What is a musculoskeletal ultrasound scan?

An ultrasound scan is a non-invasive method of producing detailed images of the body's interior using high frequency sound waves. The sound waves are at a pitch that is too high to be heard by the human ear. A computer converts the information into a moving picture that is displayed on a monitor and can be stored electronically.

Musculoskeletal refers to the parts of your body that we will be scanning which includes the muscles, tendons, joints and soft tissues.

Why do I need a musculoskeletal ultrasound?

The medical team caring for you need more information about what is happening inside you. They have asked specialists in the radiology department to undertake an ultrasound scan to give a clearer picture of what is going on. This information is used to decide the best form of treatment.

Who performs the musculoskeletal ultrasound?

Your scan will be performed by a radiologist (medical doctor who specialises in interpreting diagnostic imaging) who is specially trained in MSK ultrasound scanning. Whoever performs your scan, they will explain what happens and will show you what to do.

What preparation will I need?

Usually none. Printed instructions will be included in your appointment letter should any preparation be required.

I have diabetes. Does this change anything?

No. You can eat and drink as normal and take your usual medication.

What does the examination involve?

On arrival you may be asked to remove some of your clothing and put on a hospital gown. In many cases you will not have to undress completely but will be asked to remove clothing from the area being examined during the scan.

Once in the examination room, you will lie on a couch or be seated on a chair next to the ultrasound machine.

The radiologist or sonographer will perform the scan by placing a small amount of clear gel onto the skin and gently running a small probe, like a microphone, over the skin surface.

You may be asked to change your position slightly or hold your breath from time to time.

How long will the scan take?

Each examination is different and may take between 15 and 30 minutes to complete.

How does it feel?

In order to perform your scan, it will be necessary to apply a small amount of gel to the skin surface in the area being examined. This gel dissolves in water and will not stain your clothing. The procedure may be a little uncomfortable but should not be painful.

What are the benefits of having a musculoskeletal ultrasound?

This examination will help towards making the correct diagnosis regarding your signs/symptoms so that you can receive the best treatment.

What are the risks of having a musculoskeletal ultrasound?

Ultrasound is considered to be a harmless method of investigating the body. There are no known side-effects from diagnostic ultrasound scanning.

When will I get the results?

Normally you can expect to receive the results of your scan when you next see the doctor who sent you for the examination. After your examination, the radiologist or sonographer who performed the scan will study the pictures taken during your examination. A report is then prepared and this is sent to your doctor who asked for the examination within two weeks of the ultrasound scan.

Can I drive home?

Yes.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any questions, doubts or worries, please ask the Radiologist who is performing your scan. The radiology staff want to make you feel as relaxed as possible. This makes the scan easier for you and means that we get better images to aid your diagnosis.

This is a teaching hospital and we sometimes have junior medical staff and trainees in our department. Trainees and junior staff may be present at the time of your examination. If you are uncomfortable with this arrangement, please inform the ultrasound staff at the time of your appointment. This will not affect your care or treatment in any way.