

ULTRASOUND EXAMINATIONS

You will be offered the opportunity to schedule an ultrasound examination during your pregnancy. This procedure is best performed between 18 and 20 weeks of pregnancy and must be scheduled in advance. It should be scheduled to coincide with your office visit at 20 weeks. Benefits of an ultrasound examination include: confirmation of your due date, a detailed examination of basic fetal anatomy, detection of otherwise unsuspected twins, and detection of abnormalities of placental location. A normal ultrasound exam does not exclude the possibility of birth defects, but may detect up to 80% of structural abnormalities.

Ultrasound examination of every pregnancy is not yet recommended by most national medical organizations because it is not considered to be “cost effective.” However, most expectant parents want this test to be offered, and most obstetricians feel that the test provides valuable medical information. This has created a dilemma in that some insurance companies will not pay for an ultrasound exam unless there is “medical necessity.” Medical necessity means bleeding, serious medical illness in the mother, uncertain due date and similar problems. A desire for reassurance that the anatomy appears to be normal or to look for fetal sex is not considered to be a medical necessity.

Some insurance will pay for one exam and then require proof of medical necessity before paying for additional exams. What this means is if you have an ultrasound done early in the pregnancy for any reason (including bleeding), your 20 week ultrasound may not be covered.

In summary, we feel that all patients should be offered the opportunity for ultrasound at 18 to 20 weeks of pregnancy. However, if your pregnancy is uncomplicated this is not a mandatory test and you may decline the examination. You should also be aware that insurance benefits for ultrasound exams vary widely. If your doctor orders or recommends this test it does not necessarily follow that your insurance company will pay. Average cost for an ultrasound exam is approximately \$300.00. Please feel free to discuss any questions you may have with your doctor.