

For Your Information From Premier Perinatal

What Is A Targeted Ultrasound?

A targeted, also known as a level II ultrasound, is similar to a standard ultrasound. The difference is that your doctor will get more detailed information. Your doctor may focus on specific parts of your baby's body, such as the four chambers of the heart, as well as the kidneys, bladder, stomach, brain, spine, and sex organs. A targeted ultrasound can also tell you the sex of the baby if you haven't already found out through non-invasive testing. Remember: Be sure to tell your sonographer if you don't want to know the sex!

Measurements are taken from this special ultrasound during pregnancy to make sure your baby is growing appropriately (and that his or her gestational age is still on target). A survey of the organs, including the umbilical cord, ensures that they are developing normally (or identifies any potential problems as soon as possible). The sonographer will also be looking at your amniotic fluid levels, the location of the placenta, and the fetal heart rate. Settle in to enjoy the show: The detailed targeted scan can take 30 to 45 minutes (depending on how cooperative your little one wants to be during the photo shoot).

How A Targeted Ultrasound Is Done

You recline on an exam table with your belly exposed. A sonographer applies gel and then moves the transducer over your abdomen. As sound waves emitted from the transducer bounce off "structures" inside, images are formed on a video screen. To get the most comprehensive assessment, the sonographer will be aiming for many different views from lots of different angles in this anatomy scan. When the technician gets a clear shot, he or she will freeze-frame the picture (that's the actual sonogram) and then measure the anatomy. You can expect to go home with one or two good sonogram pictures (the perinatologist and your practitioner will review the rest).

When A Targeted Ultrasound Is Done

Most anatomy scans are performed in the second trimester of pregnancy between 18 weeks and 22 weeks. If you have a condition that needs to be monitored (such as carrying multiples), you may have more than one detailed ultrasound.

Risks: There are no significant risks associated with ultrasounds, though medical guidelines caution against unnecessary exposure to ultrasound — which is why your practitioner will schedule only a handful of them throughout your pregnancy.

What To Know About Test Results

Your doctor will probably give you the results after the exam. A normal result should be reassuring. However, keep in mind that ultrasounds are not always accurate. They can't diagnose or rule out many problems.

If your doctor sees something of concern in an ultrasound, try not to worry. Many women with unusual ultrasounds go on to have healthy babies. Your doctor may suggest further ultrasounds or other tests.

Other Names For This Test

Level 2 ultrasound, advanced ultrasound, level II sonogram, fetal anomaly scan