

# Ultrasound

*A guide for parents and caregivers*

Ultrasound is a safe test that uses sound waves to create pictures of the inside of the body. This is the same method ships and boats use to map the ocean floor or find fish (called sonar). It does not use radiation or harmful substances.

The sound waves are painless and cannot be felt. The test may still feel uncomfortable if the tech needs to press firmly on tender areas.

## Benefits

- Safe for all ages, even babies before birth
- No radiation exposure, unlike X-rays or CT scans
- Can show organs and tissues in real-time movement
- No needles or injections needed
- Results are often available right away
- Can be repeated as often as needed without risk

## Limitations

- Cannot see through bone or air, which can hide some body parts
- May need pressure that can be uncomfortable on tender areas
- Image quality varies based on the technician's skill
- Sometimes other tests (like MRI or CT scan) may still be needed after ultrasound

## What to Expect

- Your child may need to change into a gown
- Clear gel will be applied to the skin (it feels cold and wet)
- The gel helps the sound waves travel between the wand and the body
- The technician will press the wand against the skin and move it around
- The pressure is usually gentle but may feel firm at times
- Your child will need to lie still to get clear pictures
- The technician may ask your child to hold their breath briefly

# Ways You Can Help Your Child

## Before the Ultrasound

- Review the story with your child
- Ask your child what questions they have
- Practice asking for a break and any calming methods your child likes

## Share What Works

You might want to let the care team know:

- What helps your child stay calm
- Any sensory needs (like dim lights, quiet voices, etc.)
- What has worked well during past medical visits
- Let the tech know if your child will be using a word or raising their hand to ask for a break

## During the Ultrasound

- Let your child know you're there. You can stand where they can see you, hold their hand, or provide physical comfort like rubbing their leg
- Remind your child what comes next
- Offer praise for staying still, even for short times

## Learn More

[HealthEd4Everyone.org](https://HealthEd4Everyone.org)

