

Information for Patients

Ultrasound scan of the eye

What is an ultrasound scan?

An ultrasound scan uses high frequency sound waves which are transmitted from a probe into the eye. Using different techniques, images can be taken of various structures within the eye to gain valuable information we couldn't otherwise obtain.

Why do I need this procedure?

Ultrasound is carried out to help diagnose or monitor eye or orbital diseases. Ultrasound is also useful when it is not possible to obtain a clear view to the back of the eye. It may be required as a simple screening test prior to planned procedures such as cataract surgery.

What are the benefits?

The ultrasound scan allows us to assess the parts of your eye which may be difficult for the clinician in clinic to see. We are also able to take important measurements of structures within the eye which may be used to monitor certain conditions.

What does the test involve?

The ultrasound involves the use of a probe, which is placed gently on your eyelid or eye and converts sound waves into digital information to form an image on a screen. The image can be saved to your hospital records and assists your consultant in making a diagnosis of an eye condition or monitoring a known eye condition..

Are there any side effects?

Ultrasound of the eye includes procedures which are all very safe. Some techniques to examine the front part of the eye involve the use of a local anaesthetic eye drop to numb the eye for approximately 20-30 minutes so it is important you do not rub your eye during this time.

Are there any alternatives?

No other tests can give the same information. You are under no obligation to have this procedure. If you decide not to have it, the eye clinician will talk through what options are available to you.

What do I need to know before having the procedure?

The technique we use depends on the purpose of the scan but in most cases, you will be asked to lay on a bed. General screening scans are usually performed by placing a small amount of ultrasound jelly onto a closed eyelid and placing a probe over the top. The clinician may ask you to move your eyes in certain directions to help them obtain the scan(s) they need. This procedure is not painful and only takes a few minutes.

Other scans that we carry out may involve us scanning straight onto the eye. In this instance we will apply a local anaesthetic eye drop and use artificial tears as the jelly to avoid irritation to the eye. The clinician will tell you which direction to look in and may need to gently hold your eyelids out of the way. It is important that you stay still for this procedure, although the procedure is not painful and only takes a few minutes.

It is important to not wear contact lenses during the procedure, so you will be asked to remove lenses, so please ensure you bring your storage case with solutions or your spectacles for after the procedure.

You should eat and drink as normal before this examination and take your prescribed medicines as usual.

Is there anything I need to tell the healthcare team?

It is important that you inform a member of the healthcare team if you have a known allergy to any eye drops. If you find it difficult to lay down, please inform the team as it may be possible to carry out your procedure in another way.

When will I know the results?

The images are uploaded directly to your electronic patient record on HIVE, and a report will be sent directly to your consultant. If you are attending an additional out-patient clinic on the same day, the results may be discussed with you then, otherwise a further appointment will be sent to you, if required, or you will receive a letter of information from your consultant.

If you have been referred for the scan from another hospital, a report detailing the results will be sent back to the referring hospital, and they will need to contact you directly to arrange any follow up care you require.

Where is the ultrasound scan carried out?

The ultrasound clinic is situated in Module B of the out-patient department on the ground floor of the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital. Please report to reception B on your arrival.

Can I drive after the test?

It is advisable that you do not drive yourself to this appointment as, although the ultrasound test does not involve the use of dilating drops, it is possible that the clinician might wish to examine your eyes further by dilating your pupils, which will blur your vision temporarily for 6–8 hours.