

## *What you need to know about Diagnostic Ultrasound...*

### **What is a Diagnostic Ultrasound?**

Diagnostic Ultrasound is a procedure that uses high frequency sound waves to produce images of soft tissue within the body. The images help to identify abnormalities in specific areas, including:

#### The Abdomen

- Liver
- Kidneys
- Gallbladder / bile ducts
- Spleen
- Pancreas
- Large blood vessels

#### The Pelvis

- Bladder
- Ovaries
- Uterus (including the fetus, amniotic fluid, and placenta or umbilical cord)

#### Other parts of the body

- Thyroid
- Testicles
- Soft tissue of the extremities

#### Non-invasive vascular exams

- Carotids
- Venous

### **How does Ultrasound work?**

High-frequency sound waves (higher than humans can detect) are sent into the body from a transducer that is placed on the patient's skin. As the ultrasound waves penetrate the body, they are reflected back by structures of the body. These echoes make an image on a television-like screen and a permanent record of them is made.

### **May I take someone with me?**

Certainly. Your friend or family member is welcome to stay in the waiting room. Due to limitations of space, only one family member will be able to view an obstetric ultrasound. No small children can be permitted in the viewing room.

### **How should I prepare for my exam?**

**For an abdominal ultrasound** — Do not chew gum, eat, or drink after midnight on the day before your exam. Avoid any gas-producing food or drink that can block sound waves.

**For a pelvic or obstetric exam** — 1½ hours before your exam, **finish** drinking six glasses of liquid. Do not empty your bladder until after the exam. A full bladder will allow a better image by creating a window to see the uterus and ovaries, which lie behind the bladder. A transvaginal ultrasound has additional steps and is similar to a pelvic exam done in your doctor's office.

**For thyroid, breast, testicular, and extremity exams** — No special preparation is required.

### **What about my clothing?**

You may be asked to undress, put on a hospital gown, and remove any objects that might interfere with the ultrasound exam. While a sweat suit or jogging clothes are recommended, a hospital gown will be provided, as needed.

### **What will happen during the procedure?**

An ultrasound exam will take between 30 and 60 minutes to complete. Your sonographer will explain the exam, obtain a brief medical history, and prepare you for the exam. While the images are being made, you will be asked to remain still and control your breathing. The sonograms are then checked by a radiologist to make sure that they contain all the necessary information. A radiologist may come in at the end of the exam for a brief look at the screen. After the procedure, you may empty your bladder, if necessary, and resume your regular diet — unless you are told otherwise by your physician.

### **How do we get high quality images?**

A gel will be applied to the skin in the area to be examined. This gel prevents air from getting in between the ultrasound and your skin. Once the exam has been completed, the gel will be wiped off. To obtain the best images, you may be asked to change positions on the table.

### **When can the exam not be used?**

If appropriate preparations have been made, there is little likelihood that the exam will have to be re-scheduled or repeated.

### **Is the procedure safe?**

Sound waves do not cause pain. The only discomfort may be the pressure of the transducer against your skin and full bladder. There are no confirmed adverse biological effects caused by exposure to diagnostic ultrasound instruments and there is no exposure to radiation since this is not an X-ray.

### **When will I learn the results?**

The radiologist will read the results of your Diagnostic Ultrasound and send a report to your physician. Normally, within 3 working days, your physician will inform you of the results of your exam and any additional testing or treatment that may be necessary.

### **Whom should I call if I have any other questions?**

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Northfield Hospital's Medical Imaging Department at (507) 646-1143.