Preparing for your ultrasound

Abdominal, pelvic, kidney, bladder and prostate scans

Follow the instructions for your specific scan. Fasting and bladder preparation are not the same for every examination.

Confirm the type of scan

- For an abdominal scan, the clinic may ask you to avoid food for a specified time. Confirm the duration and permitted drinks; do not choose a fasting period from general advice.
- For an external pelvic, kidney, bladder or prostate scan, you may need a full bladder. Confirm how much to drink and when. Tell staff if holding urine becomes painful.
- An internal pelvic or transrectal prostate scan needs separate instructions. Confirm the examination and preparation in advance. Do not use an enema or stop medicines unless instructed.

Tell us before your visit

- Let the clinic know about diabetes, pregnancy, a catheter, fluid restrictions, difficulty holding urine or medicines that need food. Ask for a plan that suits you.
- You can request a chaperone. An internal examination needs your consent; you can ask questions and ask for it to stop.

During and after the scan

- Wear loose clothing. For an external scan, gel and a handheld probe are placed on your skin. You may be asked to change position, hold your breath or empty your bladder.
- After a routine external scan, normal activities and food can usually resume unless staff advise otherwise. Ask who will explain the report.

Check first if instructions are missing

Telephone the clinic before your appointment if you are unsure about fasting, medicines or bladder filling. Do not force yourself to drink against a prescribed fluid restriction.

My scan preparation plan

Preparing for your ultrasound

Bring your referral and relevant previous reports.

Write down your questions and tell staff if anything is uncomfortable.

Scan type and body area

Appointment date and time

Food / fasting instructions

Water amount and timing

Bladder instructions

Medicines / diabetes / fluid restriction plan

Questions or notes for my appointment

Sources and further reading

Healthway: abdominal ultrasound
https://www.healthwaymalta.com/patient-instructions.php?topic=abdominal-ultrasound-preparation

Healthway: kidney and bladder ultrasound
https://www.healthwaymalta.com/patient-instructions.php?topic=urinary-tract-ultrasound-preparation

NHS: ultrasound scan
https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/ultrasound-scan/

General information. Follow your individual clinical plan. Sources checked 31 October 2026; review due October 2027.