

WHAT IS A TARGETED ULTRASOUND?

A targeted ultrasound is a detailed ultrasound examination interpreted by a perinatologist (Maternal Fetal Medicine Specialist). A perinatologist is an obstetrician who has special training and experience in high-risk pregnancies and evaluating your baby by ultrasound. The perinatologist will look specifically at the baby's anatomy for any physical changes or problems and can advise you and your health care provider about management should a problem be found.

WHEN IS A TARGETED ULTRASOUND PERFORMED?

Targeted ultrasound is usually performed around 18 weeks of pregnancy (counting from the first day of the last menstrual period). However, in special circumstances an ultrasound examination may be performed earlier.

WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE MY APPOINTMENT FOR A TARGETED ULTRASOUND?

You may eat as you normally do. **You do not need to have a full bladder for the test; drink as you normally do.**



HOW IS A TARGETED ULTRASOUND DIFFERENT FROM A SCREENING ULTRASOUND?

The three major differences between ultrasound performed in your health care providers office (or local radiologist's office) and a targeted ultrasound are: the purpose of the exam, the training of the people who perform it, and the ultrasound equipment they use.

In general, an ultrasound performed in your health care providers office is done for one of these reasons:

- To determine how far along your pregnancy is
- To determine whether you are carrying multiples
- To be sure that the baby's heart is beating
- To determine whether there is a problem with the baby

However, the targeted ultrasound is usually performed because there is a concern that the baby may have a problem based upon findings on a regular ultrasound, or you have risk factors such as medication use, previous pregnancy complications, age 35 or older, or abnormal blood test results. Doctors and sonographers who perform a targeted ultrasound are specially trained in normal and abnormal fetal development. Therefore, they are more likely to recognize a problem with the baby (and also more likely to recognize when a characteristic of the baby is a normal variation) than your obstetrician, midwife, or radiologist.

Finally, the equipment which is used during a targeted ultrasound examination can visualize the baby in more detail than the equipment used for a basic ultrasound.

WHY HAVE A TARGETED ULTRASOUND?

There are many reasons why a pregnant woman might have a targeted ultrasound examination. Some of the most common reasons are: 1) an abnormal maternal serum screen for birth defects (also called the triple screen, quad screen, or AFP test) which indicates that the baby may have a higher risk for Down Syndrome or an open neural tube defect; 2) a woman 35 years or older when she delivers and has either decided not to have an amniocentesis or is unsure about an amnio; 3) a woman who has had an ultrasound in her doctor's or a radiologist's office and a possible problem is noticed; and 4) couples who have had a previous pregnancy with a condition that can be identified with a targeted ultrasound.

There are many conditions that can be identified with a targeted ultrasound, but they are too numerous to list here. If you have questions about whether a specific condition can be prenatally diagnosed, ask your health care provider or call our genetic counselor at (208)367-5544.

HOW IS THE ULTRASOUND DONE?

You will lie flat on a bed and warm gel is placed on your belly. The ultrasound probe will be placed on your abdomen. Sometimes a vaginal ultrasound exam provides better information, but this is not uncomfortable or painful.

At Saint Alphonsus Maternal Fetal Medicine you can expect that two people (a specially trained sonographer and a doctor who is an expert in high-risk pregnancy), will perform your ultrasound.

WHEN WILL YOU KNOW THE RESULTS?

You will be told our findings at the time of your appointment. If we suspect a problem we will discuss it and any possibilities for treatment (both before and after birth). Should we be unsure about the significance of any unusual ultrasound findings we will discuss this with you. We will of course, tell you if the ultrasound examination is normal. Please bring any questions you may have about your baby to your appointment.

WHO SHOULD BE THERE?

We recommend that every woman having a targeted ultrasound examination bring **ONLY** a support person (but since this is an important evaluation we understand having a second support person) to her appointment.

Please do not bring children to your targeted exam; however, if you must, an adult must be available to watch them in the waiting room.

IS ULTRASOUND SAFE?

Ultrasound uses sound waves (not x-rays) which are above the range of human hearing. Ultrasound has been used to monitor pregnancies since the early 1970's. Beginning in the late 1970's studies have been performed to determine the effect of prenatal ultrasound on fetal growth, development, and on the rates of miscarriage and pregnancy loss. No study has ever shown that ultrasound is harmful to the baby or the mother.

A Genetic Counselor and Perinatologist are available to meet with you to discuss your specific concerns. Counseling appointments can be scheduled by calling Saint Alphonse Maternal Fetal Medicine at (208)367-5544.



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