



Foundation OB/GYN



Dr. Denise McHugh
Dr. Janine Keever
Dr. Ann Lo
Joyce Piccirillo, APRN
Sara Amory, APRN
Laura Johnson, APRN

10 Prospect Street
Suite 402
Nashua, NH 03060
Phone: 603-577-3131
Fax: 603-577-3132
admin.fmpevgr@snhhs.org

WHAT ULTRASOUNDS ARE RECOMMENDED IN PREGNANCY?

Early Risk Assessment (ERA). This test screens for Trisomy 21, or Down Syndrome. It includes a blood test measures proteins in blood the blood and an ultrasound that measures nuchal translucency. These tests together determine your risk of having a baby born with Down Syndrome. This test is offered to all women in pregnancy, and has to be performed between 12-13 weeks. You may also have an MSS1 lab test drawn between 16-18 weeks if you have an ERA, this also reveals risk rates for Down Syndrome as well as open neural tube defects. If you do not have an ERA preformed you may have an MSS4 drawn instead to reveal your risk rates. If risk is increased, definitive testing can be performed.

Fetal Survey. This ultrasound is performed between 18-20 weeks in pregnancy. This is performed to make sure that the baby is growing normally and this is the ultrasound that you are able to find out the sex of the baby if you desire to know.

The official standard of care is to not perform routine ultrasounds, but to perform ultrasounds when there is a medical indication. Most insurance companies will not cover the cost of ultrasounds unless there is a specific medical indication to perform the study. However, it is true that the “fetal survey” ultrasound can be of use to parents. It is reassuring when the findings are normal, and even when done with no particular reason in mind, will sometimes provide information which will have an impact on the management of the pregnancy.

Ultrasound does not pick up every fetal abnormality. Only 35% of major congenital anomalies in the routine screening group of the RADIUS study were picked up by ultrasound. However, it should be noted that “targeted ultrasounds”, performed when there is a specific high-risk factor, done with special techniques by personnel specially trained, can be very accurate in terms of evaluation for specified problems.

Ultrasound does not always predict an accurate due date. An estimate of fetal size can be obtained, and from this you can determine approximately how far along the pregnant patient is, but it is still an approximation. The earlier this ultrasound is performed, the more accurate it is, but in late pregnancy the accuracy can be as low as plus or minus 2-3 weeks.

Ultrasound may not accurately predict the birth weight. It will give you an estimate, the accuracy which may be plus or minus 15%.

Ultrasound will not always predict the sex of the baby. Frequently it will, and when you can get a good image it's pretty accurate, but depending on the baby's position, sometimes that part of the body just can't be visualized well.

We are happy to provide this service to those patients who desire it; as long as they understand that in the absence of insurance coverage they may need to pay out of pocket. Please be aware that currently Aetna does not cover the screening ultrasound and many other obstetrical ultrasounds. If you have Aetna you will be asked to sign a waiver with your understanding that once we submit the claim to Aetna you may be financially responsible for the bill.