

# What is an ultrasound bladder scan?

## A guide for children and young people

### What is an ultrasound scan?

An ultrasound scan is a way of taking pictures using sound waves. Ultrasound waves can be used to look at different parts of the body, including the bladder.

Ultrasound scans use technology a bit like the sonar used by bats to stop them bumping into things and fishermen use to find shoals of fish. When a sound wave strikes an object, it bounces back, or echoes. By measuring the echoes, it is possible to find out how far away the object is, as well as its size and shape and whether the object is solid, filled with fluid, or both.

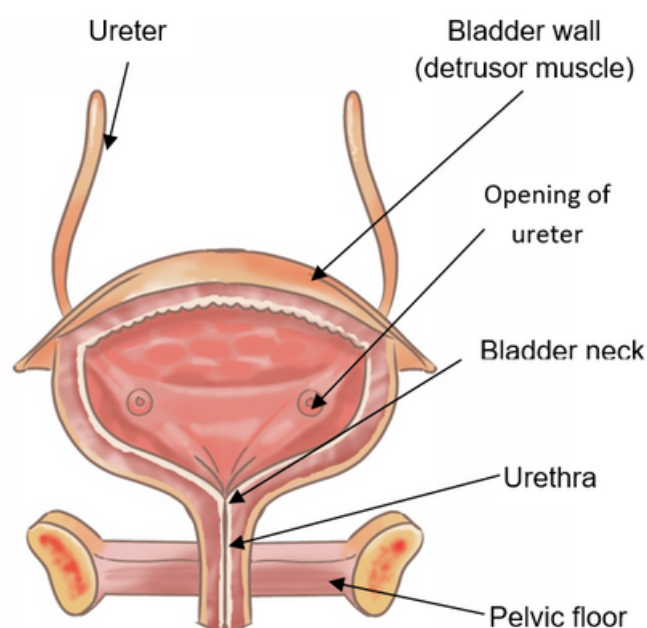
When you have the scan you will not be able to hear the sound waves, but the echo ('bounce back') from your bladder will make a picture. The pictures are recorded on a screen and help the doctor or nurse find out what is happening with your bladder.

### Why is a bladder ultrasound scan done?

A bladder ultrasound is done to help see how bladder is working. You may have a bladder scan if you are having to go to the toilet frequently, or if you are having lots of wetting accidents.

The scan can show how much urine your bladder holds when it's full and whether it is completely empty after you have been to the toilet. This is sometimes called 'A pre and post micturition scan'.

Sometimes the nurse or doctor may want to look at the shape of your bladder or how thick the bladder wall muscle is. They may look at your kidneys as well



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## How is the scan done?

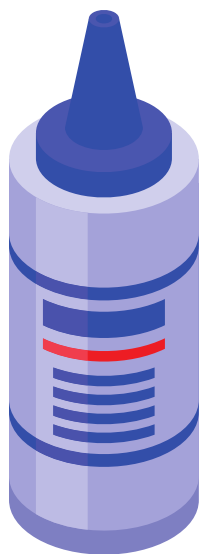
The scan works best if it is done when your bladder is full, so the nurse may ask you to have some drinks before your scan. They may also ask you to try not to use the toilet until after the first scan has been done.

You will be asked to lie down on a couch. You do not have to get undressed, but the nurse will need to be able to see your tummy. You might find this easier if you wear trousers or skirt and top, so that it is easy to lift up your top up to see your tummy.

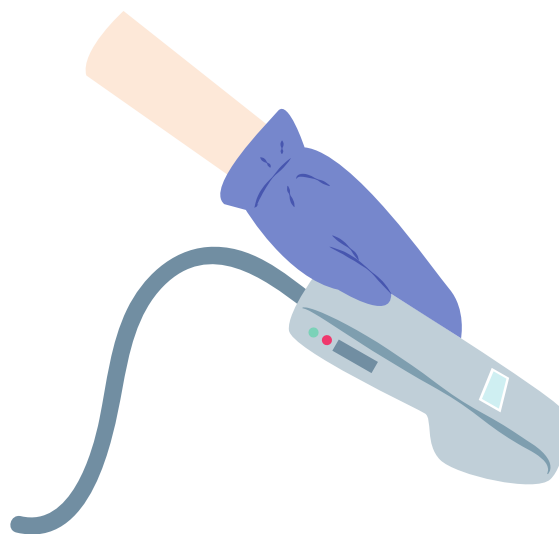
Some special lubricating gel will then be put onto your tummy. This might feel a bit cold. The lubricating gel allows the special microphone (which is called an ultrasound probe) to have good contact with your skin. The probe is usually connected by a wire to an ultrasound machine and a monitor.

The probe will be moved gently over the surface of your tummy until the nurse gets a good picture of your bladder on the monitor or screen.

When the first scan is done you might be asked to go to the toilet for a wee and the scan will then be done again to see if your bladder is empty. The scan will be able to measure any wee left behind – this is sometimes called 'residual urine'. If your bladder is working properly there should not be any wee left.



The gel that will be applied to your tummy



The probe that will be moved over your tummy

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## Where do I go to get the scan done?

Scans that are just being done to see if there is any residual urine (wee) can be done with a portable ultrasound machine. These scans can be done anywhere including in hospital and community clinics, or at home.

If the scan is to looking at your bladder and/or kidneys for anything else then it may be done in the radiological (x-ray) department at the hospital. Wherever it is done, your mum, dad or carer can be with you.

## How long will it take?

An ultrasound scan does not take very long to do – usually about 10-15 minutes.

## When will we get the results?

The nurse will be able to tell you if any wee has been left behind after you go to the toilet (residual urine) straight away. For other scans you may have to wait until your next clinic appointment to get the results.

## How often will I have to have a scan?

Some children only have to have a scan done once. If the scan does not find any problems they will not need to have another scan. Other children may need to have scans done regularly to see if treatment is working and if their bladder is improving.

Your nurse or doctor will tell you if you need to have the scan done again.

## Further information

Find more information about child bladder and bowel health in our information library at [www.bbuk.org.uk](http://www.bbuk.org.uk). You can also contact the [Bladder & Bowel UK confidential helpline](tel:01612144591) (0161 214 4591).

For further advice on bladder and bowel problems speak to your GP or other healthcare professional.

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