

Frequently Asked Questions about Your Pregnancy Scans During the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the health service are doing everything possible to keep you and health board staff safe. We understand that some of this may be difficult for you. However, staff will be there to care for you and be able to answer any questions that you have. Please see below some questions and answers, which may be helpful to you at this time.

Should I attend my routine antenatal ultrasound scan appointments?

Yes, it is important that you attend your routine antenatal ultrasound appointments unless [you are self-isolating because you or a member of your household has symptoms of a new continuous cough, high temperature, or a loss of, or change in your normal sense of taste or smell](#). Antenatal care is important in keeping women and babies safe in pregnancy.

If [you](#) or [someone in your household](#) have symptoms of a new continuous cough, high temperature, or a loss of, or change in your normal sense of taste or smell, please do not attend and follow self-isolation guidance. Contact your midwife on the telephone numbers you were given early in pregnancy. If you have symptoms, you should arrange to [have a test to see if you have COVID-19](#).

Your midwife will advise you about arranging your ultrasound scan after your isolation period is over.

When can your partner/ nominated other, accompany you to your antenatal appointment?

From Monday 20th July 2020, in line with [National guidance \(Hospital visiting during the coronavirus outbreak: guidance\)](#), if you are attending the hospital for the following reasons then your partner or nominated other (preferably from the same household) may accompany you:

- early pregnancy assessment unit scan (EPAU)
- early pregnancy dating scan (11⁺² to 14⁺¹ weeks)
- fetal anomaly scan (18⁺⁰ to 20⁺⁶ weeks)
- attendance at Fetal Medicine Department.

In addition to this, if you have any mental health needs, learning disability or cognitive impairment, such as sight loss or hearing loss and need support in order to process information then a partner/nominated other can be present for antenatal consultations, following individual consideration from your health board.

If you are attending the hospital for a fetal growth scan, you will continue to be asked to attend alone.

There may be some differences in how things are run in different parts of Wales because of how departments are set up or staffing levels. Some health boards may not be able to accommodate this change immediately. Check with your midwife if you are unsure about the arrangements in the unit that you are attending.

What are health boards doing to keep you safe?

The latest guidance suggests that your scan should be completed as safely and quickly as possible to reduce the time you are in the ultrasound room. Doing this will reduce the chance of spread of infection to you and the sonographer performing your ultrasound examination.

This guidance is from a number of recognised professional bodies, including The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), The Society of Radiographers (SCoR), The British Medical Ultrasound Society (BMUS) and The International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics & Gynecology (ISUOG).

The scan can be carried out safely and quickly by following this guidance:

- the number of people/ health professionals in the ultrasound room will be kept to a minimum - depending on local arrangements your partner/nominated other may be able to accompany you to your early pregnancy dating scan and your fetal anomaly scan
- the sonographer performing your scan will be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE)
- the sonographer may not give you a detailed explanation of your scan during the ultrasound examination. Instead, the results may be explained to you after the scan when you are a safe distance (at least 2 metres) from the sonographer.
- the sonographer will only review, assess and take images of what they really need to.

- the measurements that the sonographer takes to calculate your estimated date of delivery (EDD) or to estimate the weight of your baby maybe performed on a recorded image when you have left the room.
- you will not be able to video/phone/live stream the ultrasound examination. This is because filming affects the concentration of the sonographer and increases the risk that they may miss something important. It also increases the length of the scan.
- following each examination, the ultrasound equipment, ultrasound couch and any highly touched surfaces are cleaned by the sonographer in accordance with local guidelines on infection control.
- the sonographer will change PPE and clean their hands according to local infection control guidance.

Where will my antenatal scan appointments take place?

Your ultrasound scan appointment may be moved to a different location within your health board. This will depend on whether your health board has changed the way they are delivering services, and also on local staffing levels.

You will be informed of any changes to your appointment by your health board.

How will my ultrasound scan appointments be different?

When you attend for your ultrasound scan you and your partner/ nominated other may be asked if you have a new continuous cough, high temperature, or a loss of, or change in your normal sense of taste or smell. The health professional may ask to check your temperature.

You and your partner/ nominated other may wish to wear a face mask/ covering if your health board does not require you to do so. Please do not arrive too early for your appointment, as this will reduce the time you have to wait in public waiting areas. To allow social distancing there will be some changes for example by ensuring that seating is at least 2 metres apart.

The process for performing your ultrasound scan has been changed and this is detailed in the [What are we doing to keep you safe section?](#)

If you are attending alone you may also need to allow time after your ultrasound scan to discuss the findings with a health professional. You may be able to include your partner, family member or friend virtually in this conversation about your results.

Will the sonographer be wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when I come for my scan?

There is national guidance on personal protective equipment (PPE) for health professionals to reduce the spread of infection. This is to protect both you and the sonographer. The sonographer will be wearing a disposable plastic apron and disposable gloves which they will change between every person that they scan. They will also be wearing a surgical mask and may also be wearing protective glasses or a face protective visor.

In most cases, if you are self isolating because you or a member of your household has symptoms, you will be advised not to attend your appointment and it will be rescheduled. However, sometimes you may need to attend for an ultrasound scan even though you are self isolating. If this is the case, your hospital might have a special scan room set up for women who are showing symptoms or have had a positive COVID-19 test, or you may be asked to come for your scan at the end of the day to limit contact with other women.

In this case the sonographer will be wearing full personal protective equipment including a respirator mask, surgical gown, gloves and face visor.

Will I be able to video-link or record my ultrasound scan?

The professional bodies, including IUSOG and SCoR described above, do not recommend recording or live streaming ultrasound examinations. This is because video/phone recordings might affect the sonographer's concentration. The sonographers priority is to ensure a safe and thorough clinical examination. Being filmed in any context can be distracting for them which increases the risk of missing something important during the scan.

Recording may also increase the time you are in the ultrasound room and less than 2 metres from the sonographer.

Due to the position that you will need to be in during your antenatal scan it may be very difficult for you to stay in the correct position to be scanned and also film the ultrasound scan. Not all rooms have a patient screen and in some places it will be too far away to properly film.

Four of the professional bodies (SCoR, RCOG, BMUS and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM)) have put out a joint statement saying that they support local units looking at ways that women can share their experience which may differ in each Health board. While they still do not recommend video calling or Skype, during the scan, Health boards may have suggestions of other things that they can do locally to support the woman's experience.

As mobile phones are vehicles for transmission of the virus good hygiene is needed if the phone is to be used within the scan room.

How will the sonographer discuss the results of my ultrasound scan with me?

As the sonographer will be wearing a mask, and you are unable to see her/his face, it will be more difficult to have a conversation at the time of the ultrasound scan. Once the scan is completed, the sonographer will write the report of your scan and will then explain the results of your scan where social distancing can be maintained.

What if there is an unexpected finding detected on my ultrasound scan?

If there is an unexpected finding on your ultrasound scan, the sonographer will tell you about the finding and will then ask the most appropriate health professional to discuss the findings with you. This might be a midwife or one of the doctors. You will be shown to a room where the findings of the scan can be discussed with you where social distancing can be maintained. You will be advised if your partner/ nominated other can remain with you for this discussion. They may also be able to discuss the findings virtually with your partner, a family member or friend if you attended alone, so please ask about this.

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