

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. The Welsh Government has developed guidance, which sets out the baseline for visiting in Wales during the pandemic and acknowledges that health providers may have to depart from the guidance when required. The guidance is available at [Hospital visiting during the coronavirus outbreak: guidance](#). 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. Guidance on why you need to self-isolate, how to self-isolate and how to look after yourself at home is available at [Staying safe and social distancing](#). 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 adult, accompany you to your antenatal appointment?

If you are attending the hospital for the following specified scans then your partner or nominated adult (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, consideration will be given to the needs of women who require additional support to access maternity services and for whom reasonable adjustments may be required. This may be in the following situations, which are by no means exhaustive:

- Women with a mental health issue, a learning disability or autism, where not being accompanied would cause them to be distressed.
- Women with cognitive impairment who may be unable to recall health advice provided. Where the treatment/procedure is likely to cause the woman distress and the partner/nominated other can provide support.
- Where a woman has specific communication needs and may require support to understand information.

Women with support needs such as those listed above may also require an essential support assistant to accompany them to appointments when in a hospital setting.

There may be some differences in how things are organised in different parts of Wales. In periods of local/ national lockdowns or falling levels of transmission in their local area, health boards should revise guidance according to need, working with Maternity Service Liaison Committees, local staff representatives (including health and safety representatives), other professional groups (e.g. sonographers) as well as appropriate infection control and public health experts.

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?

Health boards in Wales have been following guidance from a number of recognised professional bodies, including The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), The Royal College of Midwives (RCM), The Society of Radiographers (SCoR), The British Medical Ultrasound Society (BMUS) and The International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics & Gynecology (ISUOG).

To ensure your ultrasound examination can be undertaken safely some of the following guidance has been implemented:

- You and your partner/ nominated adult will be asked to wear a face mask/ covering, unless you have a reasonable reason not to wear a face covering.
- the sonographer performing your scan will be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE)
- the number of people/ health professionals in the ultrasound room will be kept to a minimum -
- 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 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 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 adult will be asked if you have symptoms suggestive of a Covid-19 infection or other indications that require a self-isolation period (e.g. recent foreign travel to some countries, recent contact with an infected person). The health professional may ask to check your temperature.

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?](#)

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, 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 ultrasound room set up for women 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 RCM) have released 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.

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 ultrasound scan to file in your maternity records. If a more detailed explanation of the results is required, this will be explained to you 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.

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