

Ultrasound - What to Know and Expect

Also known as sonography, ultrasound scanning is a non-invasive form of diagnostic imaging that uses sound waves to provide a real-time view of organs which enables assessment of movement (i.e., gut contractions) and internal structures. While radiographs (x-rays) provide an outline view of organs or the appearance of lungs and bones, an ultrasound provides a detailed view inside the organs. Ultrasounds are often accompanied by blood tests and other diagnostic procedures.

A veterinarian may recommend this test to examine an area where your pet is experiencing pain/discomfort, monitor the progress of a condition, or check how well a prescribed treatment is working. Your pet may receive an ultrasound:

- If they are experiencing symptoms like vomiting, blood work changes (i.e., kidney or liver values), weight loss, or lethargy.
- To demonstrate the presence of fluid or mass in the chest or abdomen.
- To classify changes within the eyeball/orbit.
- To evaluate a suspected soft tissue (muscle, ligament, tendon) injury.
- When a mass is suspected from x-rays and/or a physical examination.
- To perform tissue or fluid sampling under ultrasound-guidance, rather than being carried out 'blind'.

Preparation: Read our [*Client Preparation Guide*](#) to prepare for your pet's appointment. This procedure requires your pet to remain relaxed and motionless for a period of time. Many routine ultrasounds can be completed without sedation and/or anesthesia; however, the veterinarian may determine that it is clinically necessary. Therefore, it is best to prepare for it. For further information, refer to our [Sedation and Anesthetic Fact Sheet](#). We also recommend all of our clients become familiar with our [Terms and Conditions](#).

Process: For scheduled procedures, your pet must be admitted for the day.

1. During admission, we will ask you to sign consent forms for the procedure and address questions you may have.
2. Once admitted, a veterinarian will evaluate your pet, their medical history and lab work, and any radiographs (if applicable).
3. An intravenous catheter may be placed in a leg vein for the administration of anesthetic agents. This requires hair clipping at the site. In rare circumstances, a small area on your pet's chest may also be shaved to place a patch that monitors heart rate.
4. We must clip patches of hair where the probe is placed on the skin – this allows better images to be obtained. The skin is cleaned and a clear gel is applied – this also improves the contact between the probe and the skin, giving a better image.
5. Your pet will then be moved to the imaging suite, positioned, and scanned. A specially trained registered veterinary technician will be with your pet during the whole process to monitor their health status.
6. The radiologist will move the probe slowly to create consistent images.
7. During the procedure, your pet may be placed in various positions to obtain the best quality pictures.
8. Afterwards, your pet will be brought to our intensive care unit, where a team of veterinarians and registered veterinary technicians will continue to monitor your pet during their recovery.
9. Once a veterinarian has determined that your pet is cleared for discharge, we will call to inform you that your pet is ready to go home.
10. After evaluating all of the information, the radiologist will then be able to make any recommendations on treatment, medication, and/or further diagnostics, and will provide a report to your veterinarian within 24 hours. Your veterinarian will discuss the ultrasound findings with you.
11. If additional procedures are required (aspiration or biopsy), you will be contacted prior to the procedure and the benefits/risks and associated costs will be discussed. Any additional results will be forwarded to your veterinarian when they are received.