Having a head and neck ultrasound scan

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having a head and neck ultrasound scan. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives, as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is an ultrasound scan?
Our ultrasound scanner uses high-frequency sound waves to create images of the soft tissues of the face and neck. It is the same type of scan performed on pregnant women to view images of their unborn child.

What happens during an ultrasound scan?
You will be seated in a dental chair and transparent silicon gel will be placed on the skin of your face and/or neck. The ultrasound probe is moved gently over the skin. The images are displayed on a monitor and are viewed by our consultant radiologist (a specialist in x-rays). The ultrasound scan does not usually take more than 30 minutes. Any gel which might get onto your clothes will wash off easily.

Why should I have an ultrasound scan?
The scan will provide us with images of the soft tissues which cannot be obtained using normal x-rays. Ultrasound is relatively simple, quick and comfortable. It is useful when we are examining soft tissues in the head and neck region, for example, salivary or thyroid glands.

What are the risks?
There are no known risks to ultrasound imaging. Please advise the staff if you may be allergic to silicon gel.

Are there any alternatives?
There are other forms of imaging, but these all involve either exposure to x-rays or more extensive or claustrophobic investigations. These further investigations may take some time to be arranged and so could hold up your treatment plan.

How can I prepare for my ultrasound scan?
Please help us by preparing in the following ways:

- Ensure that you wear loose fitting clothing around your neck to allow adequate access for the scan, for example, avoid polo neck jumpers or neck ties.
- Your makeup may be disrupted so please do not wear makeup, or bring some spare makeup with you.
- A beard is a barrier to ultrasound waves, so please consider shaving off your beard or trimming it if it covers the area which is to be examined.
- Please remove jewellery such as earrings, necklaces or studs prior to the scan.
**Consent – asking for your consent**
We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

**Will I feel any pain?**
This procedure is not painful, but you will need to remain still for the duration of the scan. The gel may feel a bit cold and wet.

**What happens after I have had the ultrasound scan?**
After the examination you will be able to go home.

The consultants will write a report and it will be sent to the healthcare professional who has referred you to us for the examination.

**What do I need to do after I go home?**
No special aftercare is necessary. You should have no after-effects. You will be able to eat and drink and carry on all your normal activities.

**What should I do if I have a problem?**
In the unlikely event that you experience any problems following this examination you can contact the department (details below).

Outside these hours, if you are worried, you should go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

**Will I have a follow-up appointment?**
We do not usually need you to have a follow-up appointment in our department. Normally you will have a follow-up appointment arranged by the department or dentist who referred you to us.

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**Contact us**
If you have any questions or concerns about your ultrasound, please contact us,
t: 020 7188 1872, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

**Pharmacy Medicines Helpline**
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.
t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
Your comments and concerns
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.
t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.
t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.
t: 111

NHS Choices
Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.
w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust
Members of Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.
t: 0800 731 0319 e: members@gstt.nhs.uk w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership