

# The Centre For Women's Reproductive Care

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## Harvey Ward

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## Ultrasound During Pregnancy

Ultrasound imaging a baby in the womb is enormously useful in the assessment of the health of a pregnancy. However, I recommend that this procedure be limited to those times when specific information is likely to be obtained or there is a good reason to expose the baby to the seemingly harmless effects of ultrasound.

If there is any doubt about the dates, the location or the viability of pregnancy then I will recommend a scan at a time when the pregnancy sac can be identified and motion from the embryonic heart should be identifiable. This does not reliably occur before 6 – 7 weeks from the beginning of the last menstrual period or 4 weeks from the time of conception.

I may recommend a scan between 12 and 14 weeks of pregnancy for the measurement of nuchal translucency as a means of screening for chromosomal abnormalities including Down syndrome (see Information Sheet entitled “Will my Baby be Normal?- Options for Prenatal Diagnosis”). I recommend that all pregnancies are examined with ultrasound at 18 – 22 weeks of pregnancy to check

for major structural abnormalities of a baby's head, spine, heart, limbs, kidneys etc. as well as to check the location of the placenta. Please be aware that 1-2 pregnancies in every 100 will have some problem identified by this scan. Most often this will be an insignificant difference in the development of your baby but all “problems” are potentially very worrying. I will discuss any such worry with you at length. At this scan it is sometimes possible to determine the sex of your baby (girl or boy) with a reasonable degree but not absolute certainty. Please let me know if you do or do not wish to know about this.

It is not my usual practice to perform ultrasound scans after the scan at 22 weeks unless certain problems are identified. If you have a multiple pregnancy (twins or more) then at least two more scans will be required in the second half of the pregnancy.

Please be aware that Medicare will refund the cost of only ONE scan in each of the three trimesters of pregnancy ie before twelve weeks, 12-22 weeks and >22weeks.

## Weight Gain and Weighing During Pregnancy

The average weight gain in pregnancy in pregnancy is 12 Kg (or almost 2 stone) but some women gain as much as 20 Kg (3.1 stone) and others as little as 5 Kg (11 pounds) but still have a healthy outcome.

Some of the weight gained is the baby of course (on average 3.6 Kg or 8 pounds), and some is the baby's amniotic fluid and placenta but the rest of the

weight gained is in the mother. Some of this weight gained is growth of the uterus and breasts and quite a lot is tissue fluid. This is why “swelling” is normal. However, a variable amount of the weight gained during pregnancy is fat and this is basically Nature's reserve for breast-feeding.

There is a correlation between the amount of weight



