Nuchal Translucency Ultrasound

Patient Information

What is a nuchal translucency ultrasound?
A Nuchal Translucency Ultrasound is a relatively simple, low risk test, which is the most sensitive non-invasive means currently available to assesses maternal risk of having a baby with chromosomal abnormality, especially Down Syndrome. The test measures the thickness of the nuchal fold, which is then analysed by a certified computer program (only available in certain locations within Australia), calculating the risk of Down Syndrome fetus, adjusted for maternal age and the result of a blood test undertaken on the same day.

All women have a risk of developing a baby with a physical and/or mental problem, and this risk is increased with age. Down Syndrome (Trisomy 21) is the most common of the chromosomal defects and has always been difficult to detect before birth. A Nuchal Translucency Ultrasound is available to anyone who wishes to have it done, and is often performed in conjunction with a blood test.

Nuchal Translucency Ultrasounds are safe, and cause no harm to you or the foetus. The examination is internationally accepted and performed.

When should the test be done?
The Ultrasound examination must be done between 11 weeks, 3 days and 14 weeks of pregnancy.

It is also important that a blood test is performed on the same day. When the blood tests are added to the Ultrasound measurement a much more accurate risk of a chromosomal abnormality can be given.

What is the cost?
Medicare does not cover the cost of the Nuchal Translucency examination on its own. However, if it is done in conjunction with an Ultrasound for another reason (such as your Doctor requesting “A Nuchal Translucency Ultrasound 11-14 weeks for assessment for risk of foetal abnormality” a Medicare rebate may apply.

What preparation is required?
The preparation is very simple and straightforward. You are required to drink 1 litre of water between 90 and 60 minutes before the examination. This is done to fill your bladder, which will allow optimum imaging of the fetus.

What documentation is required?
Bring your referral and any relevant previous x-rays for comparison.
Also bring your Medicare card, Pension or healthcare card or Veteran’s Affairs card details if applicable.

What will happen during the procedure?
There are two parts involved in a Nuchal Translucency Test.

1. An Ultrasound examination will be performed by North Coast Radiology during which the nuchal translucency of the fetus is measured. It is the thickness of the soft tissues at the name of the neck.
2. The blood test should be organised by your referring doctor. Please ensure that your doctor gives you a pathology request form for this particular blood tests.

How long will the examination take?
The Ultrasound examination will take approximately 30 minutes.

What can you expect after your examination?
There should be no ill effects after the examination.

The blood sample results are forwarded from the pathology laboratory to North Coast Radiology within 72 hours, and together with the results from the Ultrasound examination are then processed in our computer which has a specific state-of-the-art diagnostic program for fetal risk assessment.

Your appointment details

Date

Time

Location
Are there any risks?

Ultrasound scans utilise high-frequency sound waves (mechanical vibrations) when producing images. No ionizing radiation is used.

Ultrasound has been used in medicine since the 1950’s and there have been no confirmed adverse effects attributed to diagnostic ultrasound exposure in this time. Benefits of the scan findings far outweigh any undiscovered risk.

Ultrasound should only be used for strictly medical purposes by suitably qualified health professionals.

What happens with the images and reports?

A report will be sent to your doctor once the pathology results are available and the chromosome abnormality risk is compiled.

The films and a CD of the examination are available to you on the day.

We will store digital copies of all studies and reports on our secure patient information system for comparison with any future examinations.