



# Breast Ultrasound

## ABOUT THIS TEST

### Breast Ultrasound: About This Test

#### What is it?

A breast ultrasound uses sound waves to make a picture of the tissues inside the breast. A breast ultrasound can show all areas of the breast, including the area closest to the chest wall, which is hard to study with a mammogram. Breast ultrasound does not use X-rays or other potentially harmful types of radiation.

A breast ultrasound is used to see whether a breast lump is filled with fluid (a cyst) or if it is a solid lump. An ultrasound does not replace the need for a mammogram, but it is often used to check abnormal results from a mammogram.

For a breast ultrasound, a small handheld unit called a transducer is gently passed back and forth over the breast. A computer turns the sound waves into a picture on a TV screen. The picture is called a sonogram or ultrasound scan.

#### Why is this test done?

Breast ultrasound can add important information to the results of other tests, such as a mammogram or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). It also may provide information that is not found with a mammogram. A breast ultrasound may be done to:

- Find the cause of breast symptoms, such as pain, swelling, and redness.
- Check a breast lump found on breast self-examination or physical examination. It is used to see whether a breast lump is fluid-filled (a cyst) or if it is a solid lump. A lump that has no fluid or that has fluid with floating particles may need more tests.
- Check abnormal results from a mammogram.
- Look at the breasts in younger women because their breast tissue is often more dense, and a mammogram may not show as much detail.
- Guide the placement of a needle or other tube to drain a collection of fluid (cyst) or pus (abscess), take a sample of breast tissue (biopsy), or guide breast surgery.
- Watch for changes in the size of a cyst.
- See how far cancer has spread in a breast.
- Check your breasts if you have silicone breast implants or dense breasts. In these situations, a mammogram may not be able to see breast lumps.

#### How can you prepare for the test?

Wear a two-piece outfit so that it is easy to undress above the waist.

Talk to your doctor about any concerns you have regarding the need for the test, its risks, how it will be done, or what the results will mean.

#### How it is done

A breast ultrasound is usually done by a specially trained technologist.

You will be asked to undress above the waist. You will be given a gown to drape around your shoulders.

Remove all jewelry from around your neck.

Gel will be put on your breast so the transducer can pick up the sound waves as it is moved back and forth over the breast. A picture of the breast tissue can be seen on a TV screen.

A breast ultrasound test usually takes between 15 and 30 minutes. More time may be needed if a breast exam will be done or if a biopsy is also planned. You may be asked to wait until a radiologist has reviewed the pictures. The radiologist may want to do more ultrasound views of some areas of your breast.

#### How it Feels

The gel may feel cold when it is put on your breast. You will feel light pressure from the transducer as it passes over your breast, but you should feel no discomfort unless your breast is tender because of fibrocystic breast changes, an abscess, or another infection. You will not hear the sound waves. A special Doppler ultrasound may be used to check the blood flow to the breast; you can hear the sound waves from this type of ultrasound.