

Vascular ultrasound

What is a vascular ultrasound?

A vascular ultrasound is also called a duplex or Doppler scan. It uses sound waves to examine blood vessels in your body. These sound waves can also detect movement of blood cells within the blood vessels. Vascular ultrasounds are safe and non-invasive scans that can provide detailed, real-time information without the use of radiation.

What happens during a vascular ultrasound?

Your sonographer will ask you some questions regarding your medical history and current symptoms, before explaining the scan and what is involved.

The region you are having assessed will determine how you will be positioned for the examination.

A water-based gel will be applied to the relevant area on your skin and an ultrasound transducer will be moved across this area.

Throughout the procedure, you will hear a range of sounds as your sonographer assesses the blood flow in your vessels. Still images will also be taken at this time. Minor pressure may be applied with the transducer to obtain adequate views of your arteries and veins.

After your ultrasound, your report and images will be sent electronically to your doctor. Reports and images will be also available electronically via the patient app and web portal after your examination.

How long will my vascular ultrasound take?

The length of the test will depend on the region being assessed.

For example, a scan of the neck arteries (carotids) or a DVT scan will take approximately 30 minutes. More complex scans, such as leg arteries or varicose vein mapping studies, may take up to 90 minutes.

Do I need to prepare for my vascular ultrasound?

You will need to bring your referral and any previous scans with you.

Preparation for a vascular ultrasound varies depending on the region of the body to be examined. If you have existing medical conditions such as diabetes or heart failure, or if you have any other concerns, a customer service team member will be able to provide you with personalised preparation information.

If your vascular scan involves imaging vessels in the abdomen, you will need to fast. This is essential, as gas builds up in your abdominal cavity as you digest your food, and sound waves cannot infiltrate gas or air.

For arterial leg scans, you may need to fast as your sonographer may also need to scan the arteries within the abdomen that supply blood to the legs.

How much will my vascular ultrasound cost?

The cost of your ultrasound depends on several factors, including the type of scan that has been requested. Please advise a staff member if you are a pension or health care cardholder, or if you have any other questions about the cost of your ultrasound. A customer service team member will be able to provide you with more specific information, including any out-of-pocket costs (if relevant).