

## Third trimester scan information

Please note, that ultrasound examination is available to all pregnant women, on a voluntary basis. The scans are partially reimbursed by the French social security.

**What is a scan?** It consists of an ultrasound investigation of your body which, based on today's knowledge, does not cause negative effects or damage to the unborn child. This also applies to repeated investigations.

**How is the exam carried out ?** It is better to have an empty bladder. To conduct the examination, a hand held device is moved across the tummy. The device is covered with a lubricating jelly beforehand to make it slide more easily and to facilitate the transmission of the acoustic waves. In special circumstances, it is necessary to introduce a probe into the vagina to get closer to the foetal structures. This process is not dangerous or painful. For this particular investigation method, the probe is protected by a steril "single use" cover. The cover is usually made of Latex. **So if you happen to be allergic to Latex, please notify the medical assistant as well as your physician.** Some incidents or accidents may occur and alternative materials can and will be used. Several body positions can be selected to conduct the exam (lying on the side or flat on the back with closed fists under your cheek....a cushion may also be used)

These investigations require a lot of concentration and attention from the doctor or midwife, so it is very important to maintain a quiet environment while conducting them. We therefore strongly recommend that you undertake the scan either alone or with only one other adult. Small children or too many people could divert and disturb your doctor and affect the quality of the exam

After completion of the scan you will have the opportunity to ask all the questions you wish and you will be provided with a detailed summary of the findings together with the relevant pictures. To ensure proper communication, another copy of the complete scan report will be given to you for your physician.

**When ?** The third trimester scan should best take place between 32 and 33 weeks

**What is its purpose ?** There are 4 main reasons to conduct the third trimester scan

- **To assess the vitality of the foetus** (heart beats and active movements)
- **To assess foetal growth** and to estimate foetal weight within +/- 10% for « normal » babies, +/- 15% for « big » babies. This estimation cannot predict birth weight, as it is not possible to predict the date of delivery, which is considered as normal between 37 and 41 weeks + 3 days. Some foetuses stop growing and those will deliver earlier, others keep on growing very well and will deliver later.
- **To analyse the foetus aspect and his internal organs..** The third trimester scan does not detect the same anomalies as the second, some of their diseases are only revealed in the third trimester. That's why there is consensus in France to realise a scan in each trimester. The third trimester scan focuses on the brain, the heart, the bowel and the kidneys. On the other hand, the face, arms and legs are often difficult to see, but their anomalies have in most cases already been detected in the second trimester. All medical check, even conducted with high competency, has its limits, especially under unusual conditions such as : a too thick abdominal wall, the foetus in a difficult position or an inappropriate timing for the scan leading to an inaccurate interpretation of the measurements. Ultrasound will detect about 2 malformations out of 3. If an anomaly is suspected, you will be offered additional scans to confirm or not the initial observation. In some cases, the anomaly will not be confirmed or will be minor and could disappear over time (weeks). In the contrary where the diagnosis is confirmed, the medical team will provide you with all the necessary explanations and define the best next steps.
- **To assess foetal environment:** quantity of amniotic fluid, position of the placenta. The position of the umbilical cord is variable. To check that it isn't around the neck is not useful. It will change again. In the same way, foetal position can change up until delivery, it is checked by the midwife before delivery.

**3D ultrasound** is not a part of routine scanning. Like 2D, it does not, based on today's knowledge, cause negative effects and damage to the unborn child. It is useful for diagnostic in certain circumstances, in addition to 2D scanning. It may be possible, depending on the position of the foetus, for the doctor or the midwife to show you the face of your baby in 3D.