



Exact Radiology
CLINICS

NUCHAL TRANSLUCENCY

What is the Nuchal Translucency Scan?

The nuchal translucency ultrasound is performed in the first trimester of pregnancy between 11 weeks 5 days and 13 weeks 6 days, at Exact Radiology we recommend that this scan is performed at 12-13 weeks.

The scan determines if there is a higher risk of chromosomal anomalies, particularly Down Syndrome (Trisomy 21), but also two other significant syndromes called Trisomy 13 and Trisomy 18.

Before 11 weeks the baby is too small to properly visualise the anatomy and after 14 weeks the nuchal fluid is reabsorbed and the test cannot be performed. Therefore, it is important to be sure of your dates when booking your scan.

During the nuchal translucency scan we are also able to:

- Confirm your due date

- Diagnose multiple pregnancies

- Diagnose early pregnancy failure

- Do a limited check of the foetal anatomy that is visible at this stage

Why have a Nuchal Translucency Scan?

Currently the most accurate noninvasive test for detecting Down Syndrome during pregnancy is the measurement of the nuchal fold, a fluid layer at the back of the baby's neck. The fluid is present in all babies during early pregnancy and appears on ultrasound as a black space. Research has shown that increased thickness of the nuchal fold is associated with an increased risk of Down Syndrome and other chromosomal abnormalities.

How is the risk calculated?

The accredited Sonographer combines the following first trimester information:

The background risk based on the mothers age

Every woman has a risk of having a baby with Down Syndrome, and this risk increases with age. At 20 years of age the risk at 12 weeks of pregnancy is 1 in 1070 and by the age of 40 it has increased to 1 in 70.

A blood test called 'First Trimester Down Syndrome Screening' (free β -hCG and PAPP-A)

This test is performed after 10 weeks (optimally 2-3 working days before your ultrasound). This should not be confused with your antenatal pregnancy blood tests.

This information is entered into a specially designed computer program to calculate the risk, which is expressed as a ratio.

- A low risk is a result where the risk is less than 1 in 300 (for example 1 in 1000).

- A high risk is a result where the risk is greater than 1 in 300 (for example 1 in 50).

How accurate is the Nuchal Translucency scan?

The nuchal translucency scan combined with a first trimester blood test can place approximately 90% of babies with Down Syndrome into a high risk category. No screening test is 100% sensitive for detecting all cases of Down Syndrome. About one in 20 women will be placed in the high risk category, however the majority of these women will go on to have a healthy baby.

A definitive way to determine if your baby has a chromosomal abnormality would be with prenatal tests such as Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS) or Amniocentesis, usually undertaken at a specialist foetal medicine centre.

The advantage of these tests is that rather than providing a result that screens the risk of chromosomal abnormalities, these tests give a more informative answer of possible chromosomal abnormalities present. However, they are invasive tests that require introducing a needle into the mother's womb to test the foetal cells creating a small risk of miscarriage. The risks and benefits of these tests should be discussed with your doctor. The nuchal translucency result is an important part of this decision making process.

Where to find further information?

If you would like to know more about Nuchal Translucency scans, ask the staff at Exact Radiology Clinics. More information can be found at <http://www.fetalmedicine.com/fmc/ultrasound/11-13-weeks-scan/>

Feel free to discuss any questions or concerns about the ultrasound scan with Exact staff or your referring doctor.

Who does my Nuchal Translucency Scan and report?

The person who operates the scanning equipment is a Sonographer who has had special training and accreditation in Nuchal Translucency scans. The ultrasound images are viewed and interpreted by a Radiologist, a doctor specialising in Diagnostic Imaging. The Radiologist prepares a report for your doctor.

How do I prepare for a Nuchal Translucency scan?

When you phone to arrange your appointment one of our friendly staff will advise you of the preparation and requirements for this scan.

When you make your appointment please advise if it is a multiple pregnancy (twins or triplets) as the examination will require more time in this case.

Things to bring along to your appointment:

- Previous scans from this pregnancy.
- Doctor's Referral (this is a legal requirement).

What are the costs of a Nuchal Translucency Scan?

Women aged 35 or greater automatically qualify for a rebate and there is a list of clinical conditions which allow the scan to qualify for a Medicare rebate in younger women.

Fees

Exact Radiology Clinics bulk bill most Medicare eligible services, however some examinations incur a fee. Our booking staff will advise you when you phone to make your appointment. If a fee applies, payment is requested on the day of the examination.