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Information for Parents

Cranial Ultrasound

Neonatal Unit
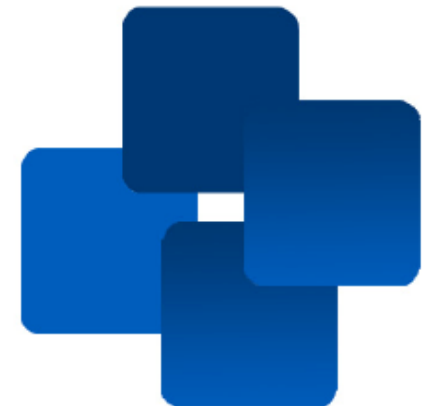
Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to explain what a cranial ultrasound is, and why and how the scan is done.

What is a cranial ultrasound?

A cranial ultrasound is also known as a 'head scan'. Sound waves are used to produce pictures and to be able to look at the brain structure and the fluid spaces within the brain (ventricles). It does not involve an X-ray.

Why it is done?

Cranial ultrasounds are routinely performed to look for problems of prematurity or complications from birth. These include swelling of the brain, bleeding in the brain and any structural problems.

How is a cranial ultrasound performed?

No special preparation is required before having this test.

With the baby lying on their back, some clear water-based gel is applied either to the baby's skin or to a probe which is moved across the soft spot (fontanel) on top of the baby's head. Pictures of the brain and fluid spaces (ventricles) can be seen on a video monitor.

A cranial ultrasound can take up to half an hour.

There is no discomfort involved with having a cranial ultrasound test. The gel may feel a little cold when it is applied to the skin.

Risks

There is no risk involved with the procedure.

Results

One of the doctors will speak to you regarding the results. A copy of the scan is stored as part of your baby's health records.

More questions?

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the doctors or nursing staff.