



INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO THE SCREENING ULTRASOUND EXAMINATION IN THE III QUARTER OF PREGNANCY

What is ultrasound?

Ultrasound is a technique that allows us to see the organs of our body with the use of high-frequency sound waves (ultrasounds, inaudible to the human ear) that pass through the tissues: when they reach the fetus they produce echoes that are transformed in pictures on the ultrasound monitor.

Why do III trimester screening ultrasound?

The purposes for which this assessment is proposed and carried out are the evaluation of fetal growth, the quantity of amniotic fluid and placental localization. It is emphasized that this ultrasound examination is not mandatory and the assisted person, after receiving information from the attending physician, can decide whether to carry out it or not. In the presence of a low-risk pregnancy, some Italian regions have decided not to perform this ultrasound but to rely on clinical evaluations and on the measurement of the distance between the pubic symphysis and the fundus of the uterus.

What is seen with ultrasound in the third trimester of pregnancy?

In the third trimester, measurements are made of some parts of the fetus, and the values of these measurements are compared with those of the reference curves to assess whether they correspond to those expected for the time of pregnancy. In this same period, the site of placental insertion, the amount of amniotic fluid and some fetal organs are visualized.

How is the ultrasound examination of the third trimester of pregnancy carried out?

After applying a small amount of gel, the doctor carries out the examination by placing a probe on the abdomen. Sometimes it is necessary to apply some pressure to get sharp images. The examination cannot always be carried out completely on the first attempt and this does not mean that there are problems. It is possible that an unfavorable fetal position or the condition of some organs (e.g. empty stomach or bladder) does not allow the investigation to be completed on the first attempt: this may require a further attempt during the same session or even on the day (s) the following / I. In the event that a suspicious finding is highlighted, the doctor will discuss it with the assisted person. It is possible that further evaluation at a referral center for the study of fetal diseases may be appropriate. However, in a number of cases a suspicious finding may turn out to be non-pathological after further investigation.

Is it possible to detect fetal malformations in the third trimester with ultrasound?

Recognition of malformations is not a specific goal of third trimester ultrasound. The development of the fetus achieved in the last trimester generally does not allow for a complete study of its anatomy. The ultrasound evaluation will however be directed to the distal cerebral ventricles more easily visible to the 4 heart chambers, the stomach, the kidneys and the bladder. It is not always possible to correctly evaluate these organs due to the overexposed difficulties. Furthermore, a certain number of malformations affecting the organs that can be studied in the 3rd trimester, due to an intrinsic tendency to evolution, may not be detectable even during this ultrasound examination and only appear at birth.

Is it always possible to detect a defect or overgrowth of the fetus or amniotic fluid?

Growth is a dynamic phenomenon for which a certain percentage of fetal growth delays or excesses or variations in the amount of amniotic fluid are not detectable with this ultrasound examination for a subsequent onset of the anomaly. For all these reasons, an ultrasound examination of the III trimester that ends with a normal outcome (which occurs in most cases) does not always correspond to the certainty of the birth of an individual not affected by changes in growth or fluid. amniotic. In addition, intrauterine death of the fetus can be associated with a normal 3-trimester ultrasound.

Is ultrasound harmless to the fetus?

Ultrasounds have been used in obstetric practice for over thirty years and no harmful effects have been reported, even in the long term, on the fetus. For this reason, with the procedures adopted today, the diagnostic use of ultrasound is considered risk-free.