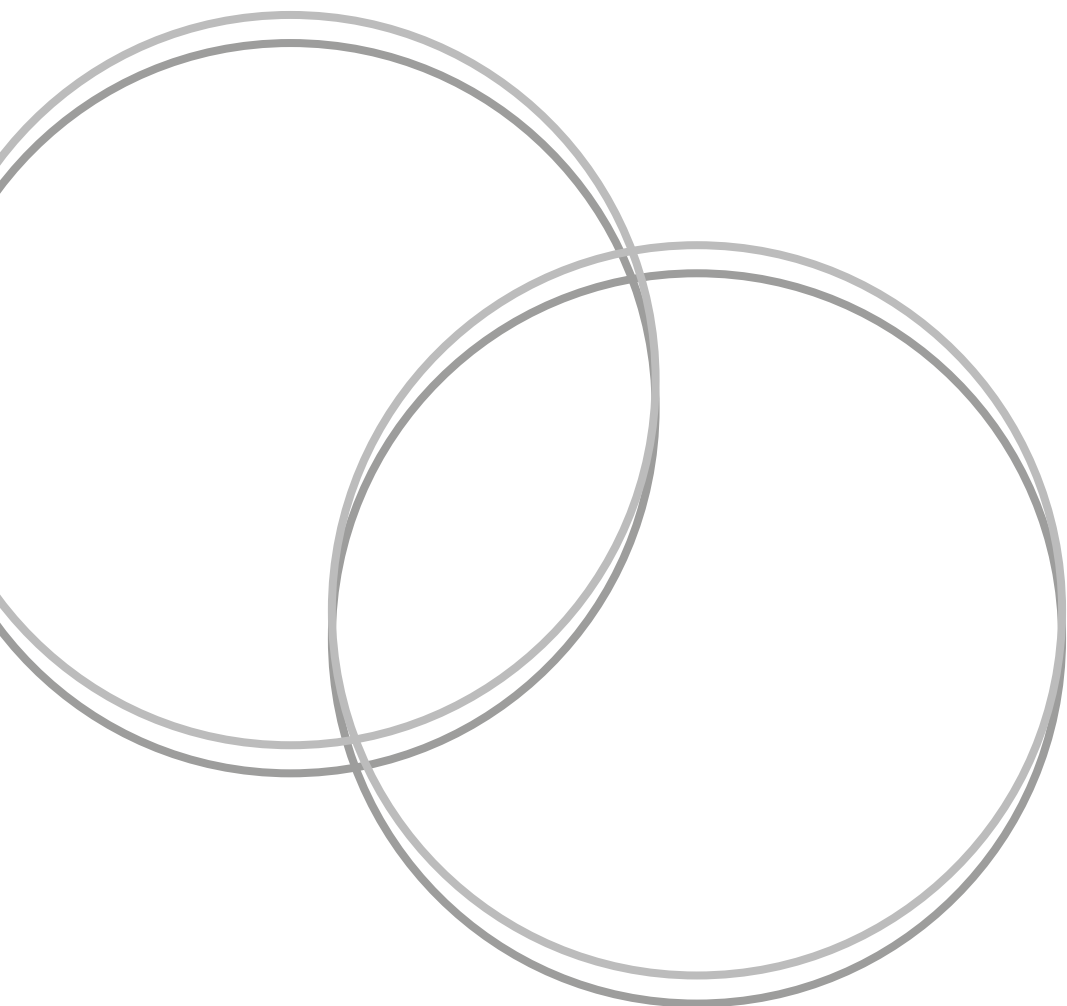




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Vascular Ultrasound

Information for patients



Jackie Walton
Vascular Studies Unit

You have been referred to the Vascular Studies Unit by your consultant or their team, to have some tests done on your circulation.

This could be to assess the arteries or veins in either your abdomen, legs, arms or neck depending on the symptoms you have been experiencing.

The time for each test varies depending on a number of factors including which area needs testing and whether both the arteries and veins need testing at the same time. To test the arteries in the neck or abdomen may take 30 minutes but testing both the arteries and veins in both legs can take up to 2.5 hours.

The main diagnostic test carried out within the Vascular Studies Unit (VSU) is called a Duplex Ultrasound Scan. Although some other tests may also be carried out.

What is a Duplex Ultrasound Scan?

A duplex scan uses ultrasound (sound waves beyond our normal range of hearing) to produce pictures of blood vessels (veins and arteries) and blood flow.

These pictures can tell us whether you have a blockage in your arteries or veins, the size of the blood vessels and any possible problems. The duplex scan also shows how the blood is flowing.

The procedure is carried out by a professionally trained clinical vascular scientist. Ultrasound is safe and there are no known side-effects or risks from the sound waves used.

What happens during the duplex scan?

The scan will take place in a darkened room to help us to see pictures of your blood vessels clearly on a screen. To allow the ultrasound to penetrate your skin it is necessary for you to remove clothing from the area which is being scanned. You may be asked to lie down, sit, or stand, depending on the test.

Ultrasound gel is applied to help the probe move more easily over the skin and to help produce clearer images.

Can you bring a relative or friend?

Although a relative or friend can bring you to and from your appointment, they will not normally be allowed in during the scan. This is to protect your privacy, the privacy of other patients in the clinical area and to help the Vascular Scientist concentrate on what they are doing.

However, a relative/carer may be asked to attend the scan if the Vascular Scientist considers this to be helpful after an initial assessment.

The results of the scan and treatment options etc will be explained in more detail by the doctor when you next see them. You may ask for a relative or carer to be in attendance for that appointment.

Chaperone

Please ask the Vascular Scientist If you feel you need a chaperone, they will happily provide someone who would normally be another health professional.

Vascular Scientist Trainees

The VSU is a highly accomplished training unit helping ensure a good quality workforce for the future. A trainee may be involved in your care by bringing you into the scanning room and preparing you for the scan, and either starting or performing the whole scan depending on where they are in their training. Trainees are always under supervision by a senior Vascular Scientist who may either observe the whole scan or come in to check aspects as necessary.

Trainees must work to a very high standard and must undergo a competency assessment before being authorised to scan unsupervised.

Please inform a member of staff if you would prefer not to be scanned by a trainee.

How long will your appointment take?

Your appointment could take between half-an-hour to two-and-a-half hours depending on which investigation you require.

Example timings

- Carotid artery scan (arteries in the neck), or abdominal scan = 30 to 45 minutes approximately.
- Single leg/arm scan = 45 to 60 minutes approximately.
- Two legs or arms = 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes approximately.
- Two legs artery and vein assessment 2 hours to 2.5 hours approximately.

How should you prepare?

You will be asked to remove any clothing around the area to be examined. We would recommend wearing clothing that is loose and easy to remove when required.

A low-cut top would be helpful for a neck vessel scanned.

For a leg scan, we would need to scan your tummy, groin and legs down to the ankle. Easily removable lower garments and loose underwear would be helpful.

Can you eat or drink?

If your abdomen is to be tested, it would be helpful if you could refrain from eating or drinking (except a few sips of water) for approximately 6 hours before the appointment. The abdomen will be scanned during aortic aneurysm checks, and abdominal artery or vein stent checks. It may also be included as part of a leg artery scan, or vein scan if there is leg swelling. Although fasting before the test is very helpful to getting clearer imaging, it is not essential. So, if you are diabetic, please eat as you need.

You can eat and drink normally afterwards.

Bandages and dressings

If you have bandages or dressings on your legs, it is likely we would need to have them removed to ensure the scan is as detailed as possible (if we are testing the legs).

Unfortunately, we may not be able to reapply any dressings that have been removed, particularly compression dressings, as we may not have access to appropriately trained staff. Could you please arrange to have your legs redressed by your usual nursing team, preferably on the same day.

We would be grateful if you could telephone to let us know in advance that you have leg bandages or dressings.

What happens afterwards?

The results will be sent to the consultant at the hospital who requested the investigations. They will then contact you to fully discuss the findings and any next steps for treatment.

Sometimes we may ask one of our specialist doctors to talk to you about the results of the scan immediately after the scan if the findings require a more immediate discussion.

Transport

Patients using hospital/ambulance service transport can only be seen in the mornings. If you are using a transport service and have received an afternoon appointment, please telephone the department on the number below to discuss rearranging the appointment time. Please ensure you have water and snack with you in case of delays being picked up.

The Vascular Studies Unit is not responsible for organising hospital /ambulance transport. Please ensure you have appropriate contact details to arrange your own collection.

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions about your procedure please speak to a member of staff in the Jackie Walton Vascular Studies Unit at the time of your appointment or telephone us on:

Telephone: **01865 221 102**

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call: **01865 221 473**. When we receive your call we may transfer you to an interpreter. This can take some time, so please be patient.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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