Cervical Length Ultrasound

This fact sheet has been developed to provide you with information about your second trimester ultrasound.

Why is the length of your cervix checked during an ultrasound?

Ultrasound scans are performed by sonographers and doctors to check the size, development and wellbeing of your baby.

The scan also checks the length of your cervix (neck of the womb). Checking the length of your cervix during pregnancy is important, and can only be measured by an ultrasound. If the cervix is short (Picture 1), there is a higher chance of your baby being born early (preterm birth). All women should have their cervix measured at their mid-pregnancy ultrasound.

Preterm birth is when a baby is born before 37 weeks. If your cervix is short there are things that can be done to help lower the chance of your baby being born preterm.

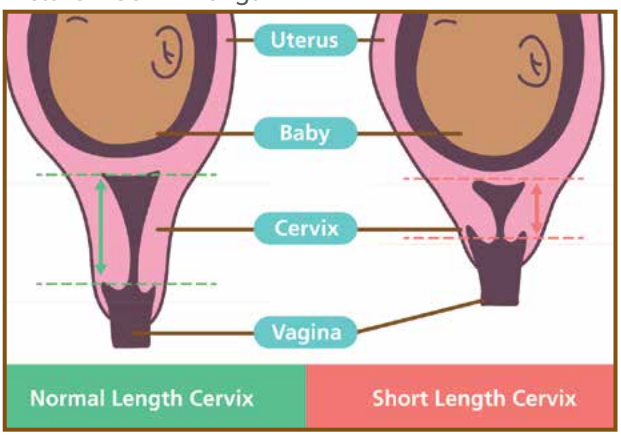
Babies born preterm usually need extra support in hospital and can have longer term health and behaviour problems.

How is your cervix measured?

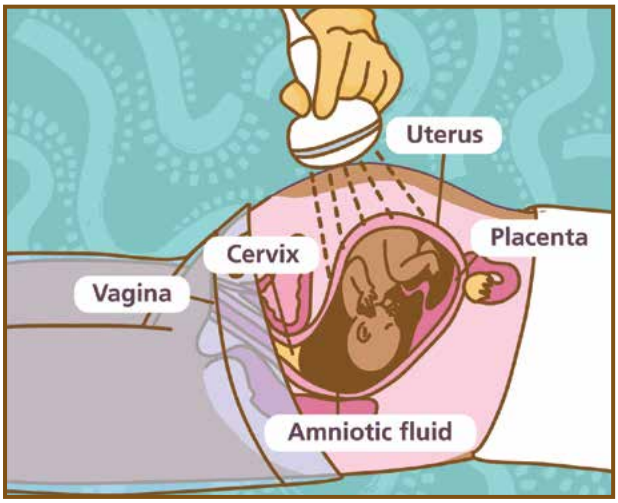
An ultrasound scanner moves gently across your abdomen to see your cervix from the outside (Picture 2).

Sometimes, it is recommended that you have an internal (vaginal) ultrasound. This helps to see the cervix more clearly. To do this, a smaller ultrasound scanner is inserted a small way into your vagina (Picture 3).

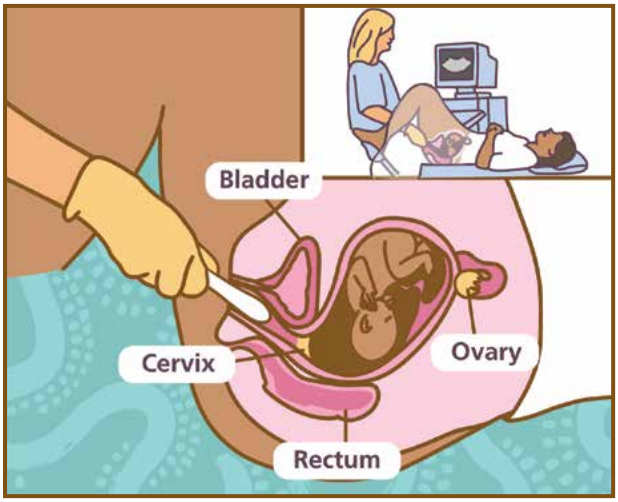
Picture 1 Cervix Length



Picture 2 External Ultrasound



Picture 3 Internal Ultrasound



Cervical Length Ultrasound

This fact sheet has been developed to provide you with information about your second trimester ultrasound.

Is it safe to have a vaginal ultrasound during pregnancy?

Yes. If you have any concerns, please talk about these with your doctor, midwife or sonographer.

Will I need to pay for the ultrasound scans?

Medicare will cover all or part of the cost of your ultrasound. If you are not eligible for Medicare, you may be charged the full amount. If you have any questions, please contact your local radiology provider.

How do I prepare?

If you need an internal (vaginal) scan, you will be asked to empty your bladder. You can have a support person with you. If you prefer to have a female sonographer do the ultrasound, please discuss your needs with your doctor, midwife and sonographer.

What happens after the ultrasound?

Your results will go to your doctor or midwife and will be discussed with you at your next appointment.

What if my cervix is short?

You will need to see your doctor or midwife soon after the scan. They might recommend that you start using vaginal progesterone pessaries to lower the chance of preterm birth.

You may need to have more vaginal scans to measure the cervix. This is to check if it is getting shorter. If the cervix is very short, you will need to see a specialist doctor. They might suggest putting a stitch (suture) in your cervix to stop it from getting shorter. This will also lower the chance of preterm birth.

For more information or if you have any concerns, please talk to your doctor, midwife or sonographer.

For more information

For more information or if you have any concerns, please talk to your doctor, midwife or sonographer.

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/pretermbirth

© Department of Health and Wellbeing, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved. February 2024 (DM7870).

Interpreter

BY NC ND

https://creativecommons.org/licenses

SOUTH AUSTRALIA MEDICAL IMAGING

Government of South Australia

SA Health