

# Second trimester ultrasound: fetal heart

*Patient Information Series – What you should know, what you should ask.*

In the second trimester, many women will be routinely offered a detailed ultrasound scan to assess the baby's physical development. A fetal anatomy study, including screening views of the fetal heart, will be performed during this exam.

## **How is the fetal heart viewed?**

The ultrasound scan to study the baby's heart is typically done transabdominally, meaning an ultrasound probe is passed through the abdominal wall to see your uterus. The proper examination of the heart structures includes five planes which permit visualization of the chambers of the heart and main blood vessels carrying blood to the lungs and around the body.

## **What can an anomaly scan detect?**

Several major heart anomalies can be detected using this examination. However, it is critical to understand that no screening test can detect all cases. This means that in a small number of cases, babies are born with health conditions that were not detected by the scan.

Detecting major heart abnormalities has several advantages, including the option of in-utero treatment (where such treatment exists), and offers the possibility to plan the time, mode, and delivery location to optimize the care of babies born with heart issues.

## **What other questions should I ask?**

- During the scan, was my baby's heart assessed?
- Does the baby's heart structure appear normal?
- Is the baby's heart rate and rhythm normal?
- Should I have more tests done?