Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language or audio, please contact Interpreting services on telephone: 01223 348043, or email: interpreting@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

For Large Print information please contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

We are a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

How to comment on your care
We always aim to provide the best possible service, and staff will be happy to answer your questions. However, you can also contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) with any compliments or concerns by telephone 01223 216756 or email pals@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Contacts/further information
If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Vascular Studies Unit (VSU) on telephone: 01223 348117.

Vascular Studies Unit

Patient Information

An ultrasound scan of your leg arteries

Document history
Authors: Vascular Studies Unit
Pharmacist: n/a
Department: Cambridge Vascular Studies Unit, Box 288, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ
www.cuh.org.uk
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What is an ultrasound scan of your arteries in your leg?
An ultrasound scan of the arteries in your legs may also be called an arterial duplex or arterial Doppler. This test uses ultrasound to produce images of the arteries in your legs. The arteries carry blood away from the heart to supply the extremities.

This test is a safe and effective way to assess the blood flow, and can determine whether there are any narrowings or blockages in the arteries. This will allow the consultant to appropriately plan your treatment.

The test is painless and does not use any radiation or needles. There are no risks associated with this test.

Where do I go?
The Vascular Studies Unit (VSU) is on level 5 of the Addenbrooke's Treatment Centre (ATC).

Please inform reception of your arrival straight away. There are often other clinics in progress so you may not be called in order of arrival.

You may bring a relative or friend in with you during the test or request a chaperone if you would like one.

What is consent?
Before your test is performed you must give your consent or permission. Consent is the process by which you give permission to health professionals to provide your care and treatment. It may be implied (offering your arm for a blood pressure reading) or formal (signing a formal consent form for an operation). In either case your consent must be given voluntarily and you must have all the information you need to make a decision. If you feel you do not have enough information or do not understand the procedure please ask

How do I prepare for the test?
The clinical vascular scientist may need to scan your abdomen. Therefore, it is helpful if you are able to only eat a light meal prior to your appointment. This will help remove any excess bowel gas and can improve the test results. You can drink fluids as normal. If a medical condition requires you to eat regularly, please do not restrict your food intake – it will still be possible to perform the scan.

How is an ultrasound scan of your arteries performed?
A clinical vascular scientist (who might be male or female) will perform and interpret your ultrasound scan. You will be asked to remove your shoes, socks and trousers or skirt. The lights will be dimmed to allow the best images to be obtained.

If possible, the scan will be performed with you lying down on the couch. Gel is applied to your leg and the scan is carried out from the groin down to the ankle. The ultrasound probe will be moved down the leg to view all of the arteries. In some patients, it may be necessary to extend the scan above the level of the groin into the abdomen.

The scan takes approximately 30 to 60 minutes. During the test, you may hear some "swooshing" noises from the ultrasound machine. These sounds are normal.

What happens next?
The clinical vascular scientist can comment briefly on the findings and will write a report for the consultant who requested the test. You will be able to discuss the results of this investigation fully with the referring team at your next outpatient appointment.

In rare cases, the clinical vascular scientist may need to discuss the result with a doctor before you leave.