What are 3-Dimensional (3D) / 4-Dimensional (4D) ultrasound scans?

- A 3D scan is a simple computer reconstruction of a 2D scan using a special equipment.
- A 3D scan provides a lifelike image of the baby.
- A 4D scan is a real-time moving image of the baby.
- The difference between a 3D and a 4D scan is like that of a photograph and a video respectively.

What should I expect during the scan?

A 2D scan will first be performed by the sonographer to assess the baby. Depending on the gestational age of the fetus, the sonographer will assess the baby for structural abnormalities and growth. A fetal anomaly scan will be performed if the fetus is between 18 to 22 weeks and a growth scan is done if the fetus is more than 26 weeks.

After the 2D scan, the 3D scan will be performed using a 3D transducer on the same machine. The transducer will automatically acquire several images in a rapid sweep to generate the 3D reconstruction on the computer.

The 3D/4D scan should take about 30 minutes, although it may take longer due to fetal position and movement. No pre-preparation is required for this examination.

Are 3D / 4D ultrasound scans safe for me and my baby?

3D / 4D ultrasound scans use the same ultrasound energy and intensity as a conventional 2D ultrasound scan. Hundreds of clinical studies on the subject of safety of ultrasound scans have been performed over the past 30 years. To date, these studies have not reported evidence of any harm to the mother or baby.

Do I need a referring note from my doctor?

Please obtain a referring letter or request form from your doctor for the ultrasound appointment. A copy of the ultrasound report will be given to doctor thereafter.

What else do I need to know?

The best time to obtain a good picture of the baby’s face is between 26 and 32 weeks. However, there are some limitations to the optimal visualisation of fetal anatomical structures. It may be difficult to visualise the baby’s face if there is inadequate amniotic fluid surrounding the baby or if the baby is lying with his face down towards the mother’s back.

A 2D scan is necessary to exclude anomaly and it assesses the growth of the baby. A 3D scan must be performed in conjunction with a fetal anomaly or a fetal growth scan. A single scan for 3D alone is not recommended. This is to ensure that we are providing proper care for you and your baby.

For more information, please contact our Fetal Assessment Unit at 6354 4115.