



# Universal Fetal Cardiac Ultrasound- At the Heart of Newborn Well-Being

## HUDSON VALLEY RADIOLOGY ASSOCIATES

Dear Patient:

Welcome to Hudson Valley Radiology Associates Division of Maternal-Fetal Imaging. Looking at your baby is exciting. It can also be a source of anxiety in wanting to find out, "is my baby okay?" We are dedicated to providing you the most detailed assessment of your baby that age, baby position and your body build allows. In order to answer the question, "is my baby okay?" our imaging practice is to assume your baby is not normal until proven otherwise.

Birth defects are the single most common cause of newborn death in developed countries. Approximately 3% of newborns have a birth defect and at least 5% will ultimately be diagnosed with a congenital defect. Because most birth defects (including the heart) occur in the absence of family history or known risk factors, every pregnancy must be considered at risk for a significant birth defect. Therefore, it is clear that initial detection of birth defects require screening of all pregnancies

At the time of your detailed obstetrical ultrasound your doctor may request or if we feel it is medically necessary to perform 2D fetal cardiac and/or color Doppler to make sure that there are no conditions which might hurt you or your baby.

2D fetal cardiac ultrasound is needed for looking at fetal heart problems. Fetal heart problems are the most common organ problem found in newborns and heart defects are associated with the highest degree of newborn death and sickness. The great majority of heart problems occur in the absence of family history or known risk factors. Optimization of risk assessment for chromosomal abnormalities necessitates evaluation for congenital heart disease because approximately 50% of Down syndrome fetuses and approximately 90% of trisomy 18 and trisomy 13 fetuses will have identifiable heart defects.

Doppler color flow shows the number of blood vessels in the umbilical cord, which if abnormal, represents a large risk factor for problems associated with organ malformations, fetal chromosomes, low birth weight, prematurity and perinatal death, mental retardation and/or third trimester growth problems. Doppler color flow also shows the placental site of umbilical cord attachment, which, if not normal, can be linked to potentially life threatening (mother and fetus) third trimester bleeding.

Unfortunately, certain insurance companies or plans may not always cover 2D fetal cardiac or color Doppler. To help you deal with your insurance company, a reference list from the medical literature documenting medical necessity of these procedures is available upon request.

In the great majority of cases, we complete our test and your baby is thought to be fine. A negative ultrasound of the type we perform is reassuring and in most cases predicts the birth of a baby free of major defects. Ultrasound is not 100% accurate and cannot guarantee the birth of a normal or structurally perfect child. Certain birth defects, chromosomal abnormalities, mental retardation, autism and developmental delays will go undetected.

Occasionally observations will arise at the time of your ultrasound study that necessitates performance of additional ultrasound procedures to complete our evaluation. We will obtain approval from your physician's office. Depending upon your particular insurance plan, these may or may not require pre-authorization and may or may not be covered. If you would like us to complete our evaluation during the same visit you will need to accept financial responsibility for any fee not covered. Alternatively, you can reschedule for these additional procedures after checking with your insurance company.

There will be times when, despite our best efforts, certain parts of the body may not be well seen because of maternal body build, fetal position and/or age. This does not mean your baby has a problem. In this situation we may ask you to return for a "limited ultrasound" (usually 10-15 minutes) to clear these regions.

During the course of your exam, we may see areas that are not normal looking and that could impact on your baby's well-being ("structural malformation") as well as certain "soft" ultrasound observations. These "soft" observations are seen in normal and not normal babies and may indicate varying degrees of increased risk for certain birth defects.

Our high risk maternal fetal imaging doctors are available to speak with you to discuss any issues of concern, in particular the meaning of ultrasound test, provide a risk check for Down syndrome and provide options for further investigation. Please note that depending upon your particular insurance plan, your insurance company may or may not provide coverage for this service.

Unless you indicate otherwise, as indicated below, we will perform color Doppler and 2D cardiac as we feel medically necessary with appropriate approval from your obstetrician's office. Depending upon benefit plan coverage, you may be responsible for that portion of the fee that is not covered by your insurance.

- Do not perform this study that looks at my baby's heart
- Do not perform color Doppler of the umbilical cord.

I, the undersigned, understand the content of this form and will pay fees that are considered the patient's responsibility. I hereby allow Dr. Daniel J. Cohen or his appointed staff to contact my referring physician and/or the Medical Records Department of the hospital where I deliver to obtain medical information for quality assurance and clinical follow-up.

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital Where I Will Deliver: \_\_\_\_\_

We wish you a joyous pregnancy outcome. Please participate in our Pregnancy Outcome Quality Assurance Program by mailing us the brief outcome form you will receive approximately one month after your expected delivery.

Daniel J. Cohen, M.D.  
Director, Maternal-Fetal Imaging