

WHAT IS AN X-RAY EXAMINATION?

An X-ray examination is a means of producing a picture of the internal structures of the body. X-ray images are produced by exposing a part of your body to a controlled source of X-rays, and are generally recorded on either a computer or a photographic film. Despite all the newer, more sophisticated forms of medical imaging, an ordinary X-ray is still one of the most accurate ways of detecting many clinical problems, for example, arthritis.

WHAT CAN BE EXAMINED USING X-RAYS?

- > Bones, teeth, bone fractures, and other abnormalities of bone.
- > Joint spaces and some abnormalities of joints such as osteoarthritis.
- > The size and shape of the heart, enabling certain heart conditions to be detected.
- > Changes in the density of some soft tissues.
- > Collections of fluid - for example in the lung or intestines.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

There are risks involved with X-rays, but the exposure is kept to the minimum required to obtain an image of the area under investigation. A typical X-ray investigation equates to the same level of radiation that we all receive from the atmosphere over a period of 4 months. You should not worry about the radiation dose you receive from the X-ray examination. If your doctor feels he needs to investigate a potential problem, the risk from not having the examination could be greater.

IS THERE ANY SPECIAL PREPARATION NEEDED BEFORE AN X-RAY EXAMINATION?

You can carry on with everyday life as normal before your X-ray. You may eat and drink as normal and take prescribed medicines.

Any female who is, or might be pregnant, must notify the Radiology Department in advance of their appointment.

All patients must inform the Radiology Department if they have recently had an X-ray investigation.

CAN I BRING A RELATIVE OR FRIEND?

Yes, but for reasons of safety, only in special circumstances will they be permitted to accompany you into the X-ray room.

WHERE DO I REPORT TO WHEN I ARRIVE AT THE TREATMENT CENTRE?

Please report to the reception desk at the main entrance. The receptionist will direct you to the Radiology Department waiting area. The Radiology Department will have been informed of your arrival by the receptionist and after a short period of time a member of staff will come and see you.

WHO WILL CARRY OUT THE X-RAY EXAMINATION?

You will be cared for by a Radiographer, but your X-ray will be examined and subsequently reported by a Radiologist (a doctor specialising in the interpretation of medical images).

X-RAY EXAMINATION

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS



WHAT WILL THE PROCEDURE INVOLVE?

The Radiographer will explain the procedure for your examination, and show you to a private cubicle where you may need to undress down to your underclothes, depending on the type of X-ray you are having. You may then be asked to put on the clean Treatment Centre gown and dressing gown provided. However, you may prefer to bring your own dressing gown if you wish. You should place your clothes and valuables in one of the lockers provided. Please tell the Radiographer if you have any jewellery you cannot remove.

Female patients (aged 12-55) will be asked for the date of their last menstrual period if they are having their abdomen, pelvis or back x-rayed. **It is vital that patients inform the Radiographer if they are or might be pregnant.** Normally two x-rays are taken, one from the front and one from the side.

You will be taken into the X-ray room. Depending on the type of X-ray the doctor has asked us to perform will determine how we position you for your X-ray examination.

- > For a chest X-ray you will be asked to stand facing a plate and to hold the back of the plate.
- > For X-rays of your neck, you will probably have to stand for one X-ray and lie down for another.
- > If you are having your back, pelvis, abdomen or lower limbs X-rayed, you will be asked to lie on your back on the X-ray couch. You will probably then need to also turn and lie on your side for a further X-ray. For X-rays of the lower limbs, we may also have to take an X-ray with you in the standing position.
- > For X-rays of the upper limbs, you will sit beside the X-ray couch.

The X-ray machine will be moved over the part of you which is to be examined. It will not touch you at all and will be at least 100cm from you. Once the X-ray machine is in position it is important that you keep very still. The Radiographer will then stand behind a lead screen.

Although the radiographer will stand behind a screen while the X-ray is taken, you will be seen and heard at all times should you have a problem.

You will be asked to remain still and you may have to hold your breath for a few seconds. You might hear a slight whirring noise from the machine when the X-ray is being taken, which is quite normal.

WILL THE X-RAY EXAMINATION BE UNCOMFORTABLE?

No. You will not feel any pain and apart from having to remain still for a short while, you will not experience any discomfort.

HOW LONG WILL THE X-RAY EXAMINATION TAKE?

The process of taking the X-ray will last only a few minutes, but the radiographer may need to take further X-rays at different exposures or different positions. This usually takes no more than 5 - 10 minutes, and unless you have had to wait (for instance if the Department has had to X-ray an emergency patient), your total time in the Department should be around 20 minutes.

WHAT IF I AM PREGNANT?

It is essential that you tell the radiographer on arrival if you are, or might be, pregnant. The foetus is more sensitive to radiation and the doctor may decide you should not have the X-ray, and that it would be better for you to be offered an alternative investigation.

ARE THERE ANY SIDE-EFFECTS AFTER THE X-RAY EXAMINATION?

There are no after-effects from your X-ray and you can carry on with everyday life as normal immediately afterwards. You may drive and return home or to work immediately and you may eat and drink normally.

WHEN WILL THE RESULTS OF MY X-RAY EXAMINATION BE AVAILABLE?

The X-ray image will be examined shortly after your visit, and a report on the findings written. This may take a few days to reach your GP and specialist at the Treatment Centre, but is normally available in less a week. You should ask the Radiographer for some indication of the time that this will take.

WHAT IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have a query about having your X-ray, please call the Radiology Department between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday on 01749 333 600.



This leaflet was adapted from an original document compiled by the Royal College of Radiologists