



Understanding your X-ray examination

You have been referred for an X-ray examination. This guide will tell you about the procedure and help you prepare for the appointment.

What is involved?

An X-ray examination involves positioning the area of your body that is going to be examined between a tube that produces X-rays and a piece of equipment that allows the image to be viewed and reported by a Radiologist. The examination is performed by a radiographer (a healthcare professional trained in how to use X-rays). X-rays pass through your body, and are absorbed by the tissues they pass through. Different parts of the body absorb different amounts of X-rays depending on how thick (dense) they are. In the final image, dense structures such as bone appear white and less dense structures such as the lungs appear black.

Are there any side effects?

A standard X-ray is painless. You cannot see or feel X-rays.

X-rays are a form of radiation. Everybody receives a small amount of radiation from the environment every day. The radiation received from any single X-ray can be very small depending on the area being imaged, and may be similar to the amount you would be exposed to on a transatlantic flight.

However, if you receive many doses of radiation, the effect can build up and be harmful. Simply put, the less you receive, the better.

As a matter of safety, your doctor will only ask you to have an X-ray examination when there is no other way to find out the information. You should have as few X-rays as possible.

Unborn children are at greater risk from being exposed to X-rays because they are still developing. For this reason, routine X-ray examinations that involve irradiating an area between the diaphragms and the knees should only be performed on women who are sure they are not pregnant or within the first ten days of their menstrual cycle.

If you are, or suspect that you may be pregnant, please tell the radiographer before the X-ray is carried out.

All the information you give will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Before your appointment

You do not need to make any special preparations for your X-ray examination.

However, as far as possible, please remove jewellery that may interfere with the examination, for example, rings for hand



X-rays and necklaces for chest X-rays.

You will have to wear a gown if the X-ray is of your chest, abdomen, hip or back. However, if you wear clothing that is free from metal, you may not have to get changed.

If you need help because you speak a different language, please let us know when you book your appointment.

The radiographer must limit the number of people in the X-ray room to those involved in the examination. If you need a friend, relative or carer to come with you, please let us know when you book your appointment.

When you arrive

One of our staff will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you may have.

You may have to undress and put on an examination gown.

The examination

The examination will be performed with you standing, sitting or lying on a table, depending on the area of your body that needs to be examined.

The X-ray tube will shine a light on the part of your body to be examined. The radiographer may need to press gently on bony parts of your body to make sure that you are in the right position.

The radiographer will stand behind a radiation screen when the X-ray is made. They need to do this because although a single X-ray uses a very small amount of radiation, the effect of many X-rays builds up, and radiographers take many X-rays every day.

Depending on the area of your body being examined, the radiographer may ask you to hold your breath while the X-ray is being taken. After the X-rays have been taken, you will be asked to wait while the images are checked. It is sometimes necessary to take further images, depending on your clinical condition.

How long will it take?

The time spent in the X-ray room will probably be about five to 10 minutes, although this can vary significantly depending on the type and number of X-rays you are having. Please allow enough time for your appointment.

When will I get the results?

The radiographer who takes the X-ray will not be able to give you any results at the time of the examination. A consultant radiologist will analyse your X-rays and report back. The doctor who sent you for your X-ray will receive your report and images within four working days of your examination. You should contact your doctor to receive your results unless he or she has made different arrangements with you. Occasionally, you may need more X-rays before you see your doctor again. In this case, we may phone you asking you to come back to the X-ray centre.

Giving your consent for the procedure

The information in this leaflet will give you an idea of what is involved in your X-ray. Before any medical procedure can be performed, the healthcare professional carrying out the procedure will let you know what to expect. It is your right to be given all the information you need to make an informed choice about whether you want to go through with the procedure or not. Please feel free to ask any questions.

You only need to agree to this examination verbally.

Informed consent

The information contained within this leaflet is intended to provide you with an overview of the examination or treatment that you are to receive. Prior to any medical procedure being carried out, the healthcare professional conducting the procedure will describe the nature of the examination or treatment you are to receive and will detail any risks associated with the procedure. It is your right to be given sufficient information to be able to make an informed decision as to whether you wish to continue with the examination/treatment or to refuse to undergo the procedure.

The nature of some examinations and treatment requires that your consent to continue must be given in writing and a form will be provided for you to sign. Some examinations may only require your verbal consent. For further information regarding our consent policy, please contact the Centre to which you have been referred.

We take pride in the standard of service which we offer at InHealth. If you do have reason to complain, however, we take your comments seriously and a full complaints procedure is available upon request. Please ask a member of staff at the Centre who will be able to provide you with a copy, alternatively call the Central Bookings line on 0845 603 0854 for a copy of the policy or to make a complaint. If you are unhappy with our handling of your complaint, you can contact the Healthcare Commission at: Healthcare Commission, Finsbury Tower, 103-105 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8TG.

**Alternatively you can telephone
0207 448 9200 or visit...
www.healthcarecommission.org.uk**

Data Protection

InHealth will keep the information you provide for internal purposes. We may also share the information you provide, but from which you cannot be identified, with those responsible for meeting your treatment or expenses (or their agents) for research, statistical, educational, administrative or contractual purposes (for example, audit and continuous improvement). This will include the National Health Service if you are a NHS patient.

If you would like to obtain a copy of the most recent Healthcare Commission report, please address your request to the Unit Manager.

If you have any comments or suggestions about our patient information leaflet, please also direct them to the Unit Manager.

This patient information leaflet is reviewed annually and patient observations are welcomed as part of that process. Braille, audio CD and large print versions of this leaflet are available on request.

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