

# X-Rays

X-rays are pictures of the inside of the body. An X-ray machine creates these pictures using waves of energy called radiation. Bones and tissues in the body absorb different amounts of radiation, which show up on the X-ray pictures in shades of black, gray, and white.

X-rays are used to check for many health conditions, including broken bones, lung problems, and some types of cancer.



## Tell a health care provider about:

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbs, eye drops, creams, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.

## What are the risks?

Generally, this is a safe procedure. However, being exposed to too much radiation over a lifetime can increase the risk of cancer. The risk from a single X-ray test is small.

## What happens before the procedure?

- You may need to remove glasses, jewelry, and any other metal objects.
- You will likely be asked to undress whatever part of your body needs the X-ray. If needed, you will be given a hospital gown to wear.
- You may be asked to wear a protective lead apron to shield parts of your body from the X-ray.

## What happens during the procedure?

- You will be asked to stay as still as possible during the exam in order to get the best possible images.
- The X-ray machine will create a picture by using a tiny burst of radiation. This is painless.
- You may need to have several pictures taken at different angles.

The procedure may vary among health care providers and hospitals.

## What happens after the procedure?

- You will be able to return to your normal activities.
- The X-ray images will be examined by your health care provider or an X-ray (*radiology*) specialist.
- It is up to you to get your test results. Ask your health care provider, or the department that is doing the test, when your results will be ready.



## Summary

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- Generally, this is a safe procedure. However, being exposed to too much radiation over a lifetime can increase the risk of cancer. The risk from a single X-ray test is small.
- You will be asked to stay as still as possible during the exam in order to get the best possible images.
- It is up to you to get your test results. Ask your health care provider, or the department that is doing the test, when your results will be ready.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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