X-ray patient information leaflet

Cobalt
Diagnostic Imaging for Life
Registered Charity No: 1090790

What are x-rays?

X-Rays are a type of invisible electromagnetic radiation – you don't feel them when they pass through your body. X-Ray is used in many different ways to diagnose medical conditions. An x-ray image is produced when a small amount of radiation passes through the body and hits a sensitive screen placed on the other side.

X-rays are absorbed into tissues and bones in differing amounts. For example, x-raying bone, which does not allow much radiation to pass through it, produces white images, whereas x-raying lungs, which are less dense because they are filled with air, produces darker images.

Risks – what are the side effects?

We are exposed to radiation from the environment every day. Radiation is involved in producing an x-ray but the dose you will receive is very small – during an x-ray, you will be exposed to around a fifth of the radiation you would receive from the environment over a year. This is similar to the amount of radiation you would be exposed to during a transatlantic flight.

You should tell your doctor or radiographer if there is any possibility that you are pregnant – x-rays are a greater risk to unborn children because they are still developing.

Before your appointment

You do not need to make any special preparations for your X-Ray. However, please remove any jewellery that may interfere with the x-ray if you can, for example it would be helpful if you could remove rings for hand x-rays and necklaces for chest x-rays.

The x-ray procedure

The radiographer may ask you to sit, stand or lie on the table depending on which body part is being examined. The radiographer may move you to get the correct position. The radiographer will stand behind a screen while they take the x-ray – although each procedure only produces a small does of radiation, these doses would begin to add up for the radiographer if they had no protection.

Once the procedure is complete, you will be asked to wait while the radiographer checks the images.

The actual procedure usually only lasts five to 10 minutes.

Can you bring a relative or friend?

Yes, but for safety reasons they may not be able to go in the x-ray room with you.

The results

The radiographer will not be able to give you any results on the day. A consultant radiologist will report on the x-ray images and send the report and images to your referrer who will then explain the results to you (your referrer is the person who has sent you for an x-ray, for example your GP or physiotherapist.) You will take a CD of the x-ray home with you on the day.

About us

Cobalt is a medical charity established in 1964 to support patients with cancer and other life-limiting conditions in the three counties and beyond. The Cobalt Imaging Centre provides state of the art diagnostic imaging facilities.

Our MRI Imaging Service has been scanning patients since 1993. We have achieved the ISO9001: 2008 quality standard for the quality of service that we provide to our patients. We were also the first imaging service in the UK to have met the Imaging Services Accreditation Scheme (ISAS) quality standards. This shows that we have the ability to provide a safe service that is focused around patients.

We use state-of-the-art equipment including:

- the UK's first high-field open scanner;
- Europe's first 3.0 Tesla mobile scanner;
- one of the world's first open PET/CT scanners;
- ultrasound; and
- x-ray.

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