

## Information for patients having an x-ray



## The Royal College of Radiologists

The leaflet tells you about having an x-ray. It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are. It is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion.

### **The radiology department**

The radiology department may also be called the x-ray or imaging department. It is the facility in the hospital where radiological examinations of patients are carried out, using a range of x-ray equipment, such as a CT (computed tomography) scanner, an ultrasound machine and a MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scanner.

Radiologists are doctors specially trained to interpret the images and carry out more complex examinations. They are supported by radiographers who are highly trained to carry out x-rays and other imaging procedures.

### **What is an x-ray?**

A picture of the internal structures of the body produced by exposure to a controlled source of x-rays and generally recorded on a sensitive photographic film.

Not all x-ray images will actually be recorded on film, but may be kept in digital form, and shown on a computer screen.

**Are you required to make any special preparations?**

No. However, please notify the radiology department if you have had a similar x-ray recently or if you are a woman who is or might be pregnant.

**Can you bring a relative/friend?**

Yes. Only in special circumstances, or in the case of young children, will they be permitted to accompany you into the actual x-ray room.

**When you arrive**

Please report to the reception desk in the x-ray department.

**Upon collection**

The radiographer will explain the procedure for your examination, and show you to a private cubicle where you may remove your garments. You will be asked to put on a clean gown and dressing gown provided.

**Who will you see?**

You will be cared for by a radiographer and your film will be examined and reported on by the radiologist.

**What happens during the x-ray?**

You will be taken into the x-ray room where you will stand against a frame or part of the machine. Although the radiographer will go behind a screen, you will be seen and heard at all times.

You will be asked to stay still and sometimes to take a deep breath in and hold it for a few seconds.

**Will it be uncomfortable?**

No.

**How long will it take?**

The process to taking the film will last only a few seconds, but the radiographer may need to take further x-rays in different positions. This usually takes no more than 5–10 minutes, and unless you have had to wait, such as for emergency patients, your total time in the department should be about 20 minutes.

### **Are there any risks?**

There are risks involved with x-rays, but a plain x-ray uses a small amount of radiation, equivalent to that which we all receive from the atmosphere over a period of 2 or 3 days.

Female patients who are, or might be pregnant, must inform the radiographer, who will cover the lower abdomen or pelvis with a lead apron, as the foetus is more sensitive to radiation. You should not worry about the radiation from the x-ray, and as your doctor feels he needs to investigate a potential problem.

### **Are there any side-effects?**

None at all.

### **When will you get the results?**

The film will be examined after your visit, and a written report on the findings sent to your referring doctor which is normally available in 14 days.

### **Finally...**

Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure, before you sign the consent form.

### **Other sources of information**

#### *Websites*

For general information about radiology departments, visit The Royal College of Radiologists' website: [www.goingfora.com](http://www.goingfora.com)

#### *NHS Direct*

For health advice or information you can call NHS Direct on 0845 45647 or visit the website: [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

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### **Legal notice**

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. It is not definitive, and The Royal College of Radiologists cannot accept any legal liability arising from its use. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please be warned that it is always subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on the procedure or any concerns you may have with your doctor.

This leaflet has been prepared by the Clinical Radiology Patients' Liaison Group (CRPLG) of The Royal College of Radiologists.

Board of the Faculty of Clinical Radiology

### **Notes for medical staff**

**This patient information leaflet may be downloaded and, if necessary adapted, for medical use and is also a direct source of information for patients accessing this website. It has been produced by the Clinical Radiology Patients' Liaison Group of The Royal College of Radiologists. If being used for a hospital leaflet, it is recognised that certain other information would need to be included for the patient as described below.**

#### ***The appointment arrangements***

- **Details of investigation**
- **Date, time and location**
- **What the patient should do if they are unable to attend**
- **Contact telephone number(s)**

#### ***Special instructions***

- **Preparations required before attending**
- **Advice on dealing with personal valuables**

#### ***How to find the site***

- **Hospital, transport, parking**
- **Department, directions, map**

#### ***Special needs***

- **Information for those with a disability (parking, nearest drop-off point, transport within hospital)**
- **Special language needs**
- **Help for deaf/hard of hearing, blind/partially sighted**