

Patient information

X-ray

What is an X-ray?

X-rays are used by medical professionals to image various parts of the human body to aid diagnosis. Diagnostic X-rays are a controlled form of radiation which are able to pass through the body recording an image on a light-sensitive detector or computer screen. Dense human tissue such as bone will appear white on an X-ray image and less dense tissue such as lungs will appear black. X-ray images are stored digitally on a Picture Archiving Communication System (PACS). Digital images can also be transferred to other hospitals enabling doctors to review your X-ray.

Who will I see?

Your examination will be undertaken by a diagnostic radiographer who is trained to produce high quality X-ray images and is a registered clinician with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). In some circumstances the radiographer may also have a Radiography Assistant working with them.

Are there any risks?

X-ray examinations use a low dose of ionising radiation. The average dose of an X-ray is broadly equivalent to the levels that you encounter from naturally occurring radiation sources such as Radon from the earth's surface over the period of a year.

Female patients who are or might be pregnant must inform the radiographer. You may also be asked to confirm your last LMP date and sign a consent form to confirm that you are not pregnant.

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to delay the X-ray examination as a developing foetus is more sensitive to radiation. If the X-ray examination is still considered a necessary test your lower abdomen and pelvis will be covered with a lead apron. If your doctor has decided that you need an X-ray to investigate a potential problem the risk from not having the examination may be greater.

Am I required to make any special preparations?

No.

Can I bring a relative/friend?

Yes, you may bring a relative or friend, but they must remain outside the X-ray room whilst your X-ray is undertaken. It should be noted that you will be asked questions of a personal nature prior to the examination, if you do not wish to answer these in front of your companion please advise the radiographer.

When you arrive

Please report to the reception desk, the receptionist will show you where to wait until you are collected by a radiographer or other member of diagnostic staff. Within the centre the toilets are clearly signposted should you need to use them at any time.

Upon collection

You may be shown to a private cubicle where you may be asked to remove various items of clothing and to put on an examination gown. You should place your clothes and personal belongings either in the provided basket, which you, will keep with you or in the secure locker if provided by the centre.

What happens during the X-ray?

The radiographer will answer any questions you may have about your X-ray and then ask you to consent to undertaking the examination. You will be positioned by the radiographer to ensure that the correct part of your anatomy is appropriately imaged. The radiographer will ask you to sit, stand or lie in specific way with the area to be examined placed as close to the X-ray plate or film as possible.

You will be asked to stay still and sometimes to take a deep breath in or breathe out and hold it for a few seconds while the X-ray is being taken. Clear instructions will be provided by the radiographer throughout the examination.

Will it be uncomfortable?

In general X-ray examinations should not be painful but some patients may find it uncomfortable to hold a particular position for a few moments.

How long will it take?

The process of taking the image 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 to 10 minutes per area and the whole examination should take no longer than about 20 to 30 minutes.

Are there any side effects?

No. You can drive home afterwards and return to work straight away.

Can I eat and drink afterwards?

Yes, do so normally.

When will I get the results?

The X-ray images will be examined and a report of the findings prepared. This normally will take less than two days, however please allow at least 7 – 10 days before you contact your doctor to allow them time to review the report.

If I have a query?

If you have any questions, then please ask the radiographer or alternatively contact any member of staff within the centre for assistance.

Can I leave feedback on my experience?

Yes, please complete a patient experience survey when you have finished your examination.

Appointment reminder message

A large number of appointments are wasted every year, where patients either forget the date and time of their visit or simply do not inform the centre that they are unable to attend as originally expected. If you or your referring clinician have supplied Care UK with a mobile telephone number, we will send you an SMS reminder message 24 hours before your scheduled appointment. This message will remind you about your appointment and will ask you to contact the centre if you are not expecting to attend as originally planned. Please notify your Care UK diagnostic centre if you wish to opt out of receiving this reminder message.