X-Rays

What are x-rays?

X-rays are a form of radiation that can penetrate body tissues. They are used to create pictures, or images, of body structures on film or with a computer. Having an x-ray exam is painless. Modern equipment produces high-quality images using the lowest possible amount of radiation.

When are they used?

X-rays are useful in detecting the pathology of the skeletal system as well as some disease processes of the soft tissue. A fracture of a bone or a symptom that causes pain would be a reason to have an x-ray. X-rays are useful in determining the diagnosis of many diseases and disorders. X-rays can show changes in the part of the body being examined.

How do I prepare for an x-ray exam?

Wear comfortable clothing, preferably clothes with no zipper or buttons, such as a sweat suit. You will also need to remove jewelry, eyeglasses, and anything else with metal, especially if it is near the area being x-rayed. Gowns are available if you need them. There are no other special preparations for most x-ray exams. However, if you are having a special x-ray exam that requires preparation, your provider will give you special instructions.

What happens during the procedure?

First you will undress and put on a gown if necessary depending on the area being examined. You may stand against a plate or you may be placed on a table (sitting or lying down). You will be guided by the technologist into the position that gives a clear view of the part of the body being examined.

The x-ray technologist will explain everything to you as they put the x-ray machine in the proper position. The technologist will go behind a protective screen or wall to take the x-ray image. You may be asked to hold your breath for a short time, only a few seconds, while they take the x-ray exposure. You have to remain perfectly still while the x-ray picture is being taken. Several films of one area may be taken.

What are the risks associated with an x-ray exam?

X-rays have been used for a hundred of years and receiving small quantities of radiation has not been shown to increase your risk significantly. If you are pregnant or possibly pregnant inform your referring physician so that they can assess and make modifications to the procedure if necessary.

Source: MD Consult