

Having an x-ray

This leaflet explains more about having an x-ray, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives. It also provides information on what you can expect when you come to hospital.

If you have any further questions, please speak to your doctor, radiographer or nurse.

What is an x-ray?

X-rays are similar to light, except that they have a much higher frequency which makes them invisible to the naked eye. An x-ray is a widely used diagnostic test, to examine the inside of the body by creating an image much like a photograph.

What happens during an x-ray?

- Your x-ray will be performed by a radiographer.
- You may be asked to change into a hospital gown. There are many different x-ray examinations and depending on your particular examination you may be asked to remove certain items of clothing and jewellery.
- The radiographer will ask you to confirm some details, including your identity.
- You will then be asked to move into different positions in order to take the x-ray.
- Some x-ray examinations require the use of different equipment in different rooms. It may, therefore, seem as though some patients go in ahead of turn, but this is not the case.

Why should I have an x-ray?

An x-ray can give information that leads to, or helps make a diagnosis about your medical condition. X-rays can also be used to monitor an existing condition. It will be your doctor, or sometimes a nurse, who decides that you might benefit from having an x-ray.

What are the risks?

X-rays are of a type of radiation known as ionising radiation. The dose that you get from a medical x-ray is very low and the associated risks are minimal. They are similar in strength to other sources of natural radiation that people are exposed to everyday without even realising it. The radiographer is responsible for making sure that your dose is kept as low as possible and that the benefits of having the x-ray outweigh any risk.

Female patients:

Radiation can be harmful for an unborn baby. If you are, or think you may be pregnant you must tell the radiographer before the x-ray. For some examinations the radiographer may check your pregnancy status with you before the x-ray.

Each x-ray request will be checked by the radiographer to make sure it is properly justified and necessary. An x-ray is very quick and no appointment is needed. It is often the first point of investigation to help the doctor decide if any other forms of imaging or tests are needed.

How can I prepare for an x-ray?

- If you were given a form from the doctor who referred you for an x-ray, such as your GP, please bring this with you.
- **Clothes:** There are various items of clothing that can affect the quality of the x-ray and you may be asked to remove them and wear a hospital gown. If you do not wish to change into a hospital gown then please do not wear clothing with zips, metal, buttons or that are made out of thick material. You may also be asked to remove jewellery, dentures, glasses and any metal objects or clothing that might interfere with the x-ray images. The items that need to be removed will depend on the type of examination that you are having.
- **Relatives and escorts:** You may bring a friend or relative with you to the x-ray department when you have your x-rays, although they will not normally be allowed into the examination room.
- **Children:** Unfortunately we are unable to offer childcare facilities. If you need to bring your children with you, please bring along an adult who can supervise them while your examination is being done.
- If you have any medical problem which you feel may affect your safety in the department, or if you feel you may need any assistance, please let us know when you arrive.

Giving my consent (permission)

The radiographer will ask you if you are happy for the x-ray to go ahead. This is a form of verbal consent and may only involve the radiographer checking you are booked for the correct x-ray. If you do not wish to have the x-ray or are undecided, please ask the radiographer so that they can answer any questions you may have.

Remember, it is your decision. You can change your mind at any time and your wishes will be respected. However, not having the x-ray may delay your diagnosis as the doctors may not have all the needed information.

If you would like to read our consent policy, please ask a member of staff.

Will I feel any pain?

You cannot feel x-rays and so the procedure itself is painless. However, it is important for the radiographer to get you into the correct position. Holding this position or lying on the x-ray table may, for some people, feel uncomfortable, but for the majority of patients this is not the case.

What happens after an x-ray?

The radiographer may ask you to wait in the department while they check that no more x-ray pictures are required. As soon as the radiographer is satisfied that no more x-rays are needed, you will be free to leave the department.

When will I get the results?

Your x-ray pictures will be studied by a radiologist (a doctor who uses x-rays to diagnose and treat illnesses) and the results will be sent to the doctor who referred you.

The radiographer will tell you how to get your results and how long it will take, as this may be slightly different for each patient. You may already have an appointment with the doctor who referred you. If not, please contact them to arrange a time to talk about the results and any treatment you may need.

If you are staying in hospital, the results will be given to the doctors looking after you on the ward.

What should I do if I have a problem?

You should not have any problem that is a result of the x-ray. If you feel your condition has changed, or you need further medical advice before receiving your results, please make an appointment with the doctor that referred you, or in an emergency, go to your local accident and emergency (A&E) department.

Further information

If you would like further information about having an x-ray please visit www.goingfora.com

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about coming for your x-ray, please contact the x-ray reception on **020 7188 5490** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

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