

Having an X-ray

You have been referred by your doctor to have an X-ray examination.

This leaflet explains what will happen during your X-ray, how to prepare, and any associated risks.

What is an X-ray?

An X-ray uses a small amount of ionising radiation to produce images of the inside of your body. These images help doctors make a diagnosis, plan your treatment, or monitor your condition. The amount of radiation used is kept as low as possible while still producing images that are useful for diagnosis.

Is there any preparation?

For most X-rays, no special preparation is needed. Some X-rays require specific positioning or instructions, which will be explained to you when you attend your appointment.

It is important that you tell us if:

- There is any possibility you may be pregnant
- You have mobility difficulties

Metal and certain clothing features can interfere with the clarity of the images we take. If your X-ray requires you to remove metal objects (such as jewelry or bras with underwires or metal clasps) or clothing that may create artefacts (for example logos, glitter, or sparkly designs), the radiographer will advise you. A gown will be provided if needed.

What happens when I come for the scan?

A radiographer (a healthcare professional trained in medical imaging) will carry out your examination.

You may be asked to stand, sit, or lie on the X-ray table depending on the part of the body being imaged. The radiographer will position you carefully to obtain the best images.

You may also be asked to keep still or hold your breath for a few seconds.

The examination usually takes less than 10 minutes. However, your total appointment time may be longer depending on the number of images required.

X-ray examinations do not cause any pain or sensation.



What are the risks?

Radiation

We will expose you to ionising radiation when we carry out this examination. We are all exposed to ionising radiation every day from natural sources such as cosmic rays, soils and rocks, and even food.

Ionising radiation can cause cell damage which, after many years, may very rarely turn cancerous. The estimated risk from a typical X-ray is less than 0.01%, which is very small. The risk will be far outweighed by the benefits of you having this exposure.

Before your X-ray, we ensure that:

- The benefits of your examination outweigh the risks.
- The radiation dose is kept as low as reasonably achievable.
- The amount of radiation we use is tailored to you.
- Equipment is regularly tested and maintained to ensure safety and optimal performance.

Pregnancy

We try to avoid giving radiation to an unborn baby wherever possible. If you are or think you might be pregnant, please tell the radiographer before your examination.

What happens after the X-ray?

You can leave the department as soon as the examination is complete. There are no after-effects, and you may resume normal activities immediately.

Your images will be carefully reviewed and interpreted by a radiologist (a doctor who is an expert in image interpretation), who will send a report to your referring clinician. They will discuss the results with you at your next appointment.

Where can I get further information?

The staff in the Radiology department will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Please ask at the time of your appointment or telephone the department at any time.

Cavendish Square - Radiology Reception 020 7811 8941

Chelsea (Reuben Imaging Centre) - X-ray Reception 020 7808 2575

Sutton - X-ray Reception 020 8661 3222

If you feel unwell or have concerns about your health, please contact:

The Royal Marsden Hotline 020 8915 6899

You can ring the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments. This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

