

Radiation Exposure From X-rays For Children

A guide for parents and guardians

Families often have questions about x-rays that have been recommended for their children. In this guide you will find answers to some of the most commonly asked questions. If you have other questions or concerns, ask a member of our staff and they will be glad to help you.



What is an x-ray?

An x-ray is a type of radiation that can penetrate through the body. Some of the x-rays simply pass through your child. Others are stopped by bones and organs, creating a “shadow” image on a detector. Your child will not feel the x-rays.

What happens during imaging?

An x-ray machine is positioned above your child sending x-rays through their body to a detector below them. A computer is used to convert the x-rays into images that let the radiologist “see” into your child’s body.

Is this radiation harmful to my child?

An x-ray can give your doctor very useful information to be used in the care of your child. Your doctor has determined that the information from your child’s x-ray is of greater benefit than the risk from radiation.

We are all exposed to small amounts of radiation all the time - mainly from the sun and the soil. Scientists call this background radiation. The effect of a small amount of radiation is not clearly understood, but scientists believe that it may slightly increase the risk of cancer.

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How can the risk be decreased?

Our x-ray protocols are tailored for children. This allows us to use the least amount of radiation for your child's x-ray exam.

If your child has a serious or emergency condition that requires an x-ray, it is highly recommended that you allow your child to have an x-ray exam.

There are other radiology tests, such as MRI or Ultrasound, that do not use radiation, however they cannot always provide the same information as an x-ray.

If the x-ray is normal, does that mean it should not have been done?

Every x-ray exam gives your doctor useful information. Even a normal exam can help diagnose your child's medical problem.

What should I do if I still have concerns?

You should discuss your concerns with the doctor who ordered the exam. Your doctor may also contact one of the radiologists on our staff. Additional information is available on the following websites:

- Society for pediatric radiology (<http://www.pedrad.org/associations/5364/ig/>)
- Radiological Society of North America (<http://www.radiologyinfo.org/>)

If you still have concerns about your child's x-ray exam today, let one of our staff members know.