

Chest X-rays

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains how chest X-rays work, how to prepare, what to expect, and how to get your results.

What is a chest X-ray?

An X-ray (radiology exam) is a medical test that produces images (pictures) of a part of a body. For a chest X-ray, images are taken of the upper torso.

Doctors use chest X-rays to assess the lungs, heart, and chest wall. This exam can help diagnose pneumonia, heart failure, emphysema, lung cancer, and other health problems.

How does the exam work?

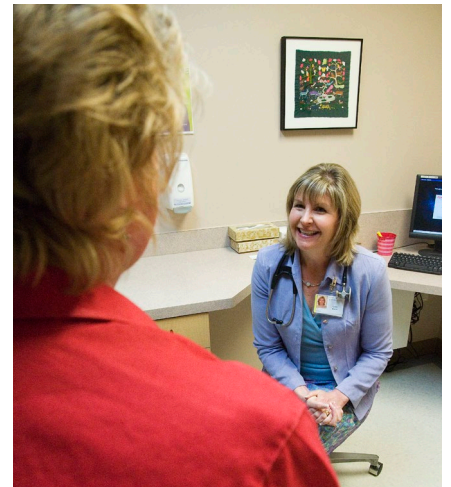
An X-ray machine is like a camera. But, it uses X-rays instead of light to create images. When the machine is turned on, X-rays pass through the part of the body that is being studied. Your doctor will view the images on a computer screen.

How do I prepare?

- You do not need to prepare in any special way for chest X-rays.
- *If you were assigned female at birth:* Tell your doctor or the X-ray technologist if there is any chance that you may be pregnant.

How is the exam done?

- First, we will ask you to:
 - Change into a hospital gown
 - Remove jewelry, glasses, and any metal objects that could show up on the pictures
- For most chest X-rays, you will stand with your chest pressed to the X-ray machine, with your hands on your hips and your shoulders pushed forward.



Talk with your referring provider about the results of your chest X-ray exam.

- If you cannot stand, we will use a special X-ray machine that allows you to sit or lie.
- The technologist will then leave the room.
- The technologist will talk with you through an intercom and ask you to be still, to take a deep breath, and hold it while the X-ray is being taken. This reduces the chance of blurring the image.
- You will hear the X-ray machine turn on and off. While it is on, it will send a beam of X-rays through your body to expose the film.
- The technologist may need to take more views to see all parts of your chest, or may take a side view of your chest. For the side view, you will stand with your side to the plate, with your arms up.
- Views from other angles may be taken if the radiologist needs to check more areas of the chest.
- If needed, a chest X-ray may be repeated hours, days, or months later to check for any changes.
- When your X-rays are done, the technologist will ask you to wait until they check to make sure they have clear images.

What will I feel during the exam?

- X-ray exams should not cause pain. You may feel some discomfort from having the cold plate against your chest.
- People with arthritis or injuries to the chest wall, shoulders, or arms may feel discomfort trying to hold a position for the chest X-ray. If you are uncomfortable, the X-ray technologist will help you to find a better position.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC - Montlake Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- UWMC - Northwest Imaging Services: 206.668.2073
- HMC Imaging Services: 206.744.3105

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A *radiologist* is a doctor who is skilled in reading chest X-rays and other types of radiology exams. The radiologist will review your results and send a report to your primary care or referring provider. The radiologist will not talk with you about your X-ray images.

Your own provider will give you your results. You and your provider will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

You may also read your results on your MyChart page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.