



# Bone X-ray

*How to prepare for your procedure*

**Bone X-ray exams are done to assess bone injuries. Read this handout to learn about how the exam works, how to prepare for the exam, how the exam is performed, what to expect during the exam, and how to get your results.**

## What is a bone X-ray?

Radiography, or an X-ray, as it is most commonly known, is the oldest and most often used form of medical imaging. X-rays can produce diagnostic pictures of the human body on film or digitally on a computer screen.

X-ray imaging is the fastest and easiest way for a doctor to view and assess broken bones, such as skull fractures and spine injuries. At least two pictures (from different angles) are taken and often three pictures are needed if the problem is around a joint (knee, elbow or wrist). X-rays also play a key role in guiding orthopedic surgery and in the treatment of sports-related injuries. X-rays may reveal more advanced forms of cancer in bones, although early screening for cancer findings requires other methods.

## How does the exam work?

Radiography involves exposing a part of the body to a small dose of radiation to produce a picture of the internal organs.

## How should I prepare for the exam?

- There is no special preparation required for most bone X-rays.
- Once you arrive, you may be asked to change into a gown before your exam.
- You will also be asked to remove jewelry, glasses and any metal objects that could show up on the pictures and overlap key findings.
- Tell your doctor or X-ray technologist if there is any chance that you may be pregnant.

## Questions?

Call 206-598-6200

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

**Imaging Services**  
**206-598-6200**

---

---

---

---

## How is the exam performed?

The X-ray technologist will place you on the exam table, and will place a film holder (cassette) under the table in the area of your body to be imaged. Sandbags or pillows may help you hold the proper position. The technologist then walks into another room and will ask you to hold very still for a few seconds. The machine is turned on, sending a beam of X-rays through your body to expose the film. The technologist will then reposition you for another view, and repeat the process.

When your X-rays are done, you will be asked to wait until the technologist checks the pictures for quality.

## What will I feel during the exam?

X-ray exams are painless. Some discomfort may result from lying on the cold, hard table. Sometimes, to get a clear image of an injury such as a likely fracture, you may be asked to hold an uncomfortable position for a short time. Any movement could blur the picture and make it necessary to repeat the exam.

## Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist is a doctor skilled in bone X-ray and all other types of radiology exams. The radiologist will review your results, and will send a report to your primary care or referring doctor, who will give you your results. The radiologist does not discuss the results with you.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
**MEDICAL CENTER**  
UW Medicine

**Imaging Services**

Box 357115  
1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195  
206-598-6200