



Chest X-ray

How to prepare for your procedure

Chest X-ray exams are done to assess the lungs, heart, and chest wall. 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 chest X-ray?

A chest X-ray is done to assess the lungs, heart and chest wall. Pneumonia, heart failure, emphysema, lung cancer and other medical problems can be diagnosed or suspected on a chest X-ray.

How does the exam work?

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

How should I prepare for the exam?

Chest X-rays require no special preparation. Tell your doctor or X-ray technologist if there is any chance that you may be pregnant.

How is the exam performed?

1. You will need to remove your clothing, including undergarments that may contain metal. You will be given a loose-fitting gown to wear.
2. You will be asked to remove all metallic jewelry that may obstruct the X-rays.
3. Normally, a frontal view is obtained, in which you stand with your chest pressed to the plate, with hands on hips and elbows pushed in front. Some X-ray machines are designed for patients who cannot stand.
4. The technologist will ask you to be still, to take a deep breath, and hold it. Breath-holding, after a deep breath, reduces the chance of a blurred image and also improves the quality of the X-ray image.
5. Next, the technologist walks into another room to turn on the X-ray machine, which sends a beam of X-rays from the source behind you, through your chest, to the film.

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.

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6. The technologist may need to take more views to see all parts of the chest, or may take a side view of the chest. For the side view, you will stand sideways to the plate with arms up.
7. Views from other angles may be taken if the radiologist needs to check more areas of the chest.
8. A chest X-ray may be repeated within hours, days, or months to check for any changes.
9. When the chest X-rays are done, you will be asked to wait until the technologist checks the quality of the pictures.

What will I feel during the exam?

Chest X-ray is a painless exam. Slight discomfort may come from the cold plate against your chest. People with arthritis or injuries to the chest wall, shoulders, or arms may have discomfort trying to hold a position for the chest X-ray. In these cases, the X-ray technologist will help you to find a better position.

Who interprets the results and how do I get them?

A radiologist is a doctor skilled in chest 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.

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