

Checking if you are pregnant before having an X-ray

Department of Radiology

Information for Patients

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What are the risks from X-rays to an unborn baby?

X-rays are a type of radiation that can pass through the body.

We have to be very careful about X-rays during pregnancy. This is because an unborn baby is more sensitive to radiation than an adult.

Having X-rays during pregnancy does not increase the risk of miscarriage.

Having X-rays during pregnancy does not cause problems in the unborn baby, like birth defects and physical or mental development problems.

If an unborn baby is exposed to radiation there is a very small increased risk that the baby may go on to develop cancer in childhood. This is why we keep the dose of radiation used in an X-ray exam as low as possible.

What happens if I am pregnant or could be pregnant?

It is OK for you to have an X-ray of parts of your body away from your tummy, like the head, chest, arms or lower legs. This is because the radiation does not go near the baby. We need to take special care if you need an X-ray of your tummy or near to your womb.

If you are pregnant or could be pregnant, we will talk to the doctor looking after you. They will decide if your X-ray test should be delayed.

Your doctor can suggest that you have the X-ray test if it is essential to diagnose and treat your illness, to keep you and your unborn baby healthy.

Sometimes there may be a choice of tests which can be done to diagnose your illness. The decision on which test is safest to do may depend on how many weeks pregnant you are.

The X-ray test may go ahead if the health benefit clearly outweighs a small radiation risk to your baby. This happens only after your doctor has talked to you about any other options.

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Rules and procedures that we follow to check if you could be pregnant

There are rules that we must follow for all X-ray tests. These are called Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2017 (IR(ME)R 2017).

These rules say that there must be a way to check if someone of childbearing age having an X-ray test might be pregnant.

Which patients do the rules apply to?

The rules apply to patients who are:

- having an X-ray test of the tummy (abdomen) or hip (pelvis) area.
- age 16 to 55 years
- children aged 10 to 16 who are registered as female

The person doing each X-ray test is legally responsible for checking whether or not the person having the X-ray is, or may be pregnant.

How do we check if a patient could be pregnant?

The way we ask if you could be pregnant depends on your age, your registered gender and what type of X-ray exam you are having.

We will ask you some questions to check if there is any chance you could be pregnant.

Procedure for tests which give a low dose of X-rays

Low dose X-ray tests include X-rays of the tummy (abdomen), lower back and hips, barium meal and swallow test. They also include some X-ray treatment procedures that do not X-ray the womb.

These tests or procedures can go ahead if your menstrual period is not overdue.

Procedure for tests which give a higher dose of X-rays

Higher dose tests include CT scans of the tummy (abdomen) and pelvis, and complex X-ray treatments or procedures that X-ray the womb.

These tests or procedures can go ahead if your period was within the previous 10 days.

An X-ray test can go ahead if there is no chance of you being pregnant.



How do doctors decide if the test is needed?

If you are pregnant or there is a chance you could be pregnant, we have to decide if the benefit of doing the X-ray test outweighs the possible risk to your unborn baby. A doctor who is specially trained in X-ray tests (a radiologist) and the doctor who wanted you to have the test will make this decision.

If they decide that it is important that the test is done straight away, then they can over rule the pregnancy checking procedure. Then the test may go ahead.

Before you agree to have the X-ray test, the doctor will talk to you about the risks and benefits of having the test. This is to give you all the information you need to make a decision.

If possible, the radiologist and your referring doctor may look to see if there is a different type of test that does not use X-rays.

What if I need to talk to someone?

If you have any questions or concerns:

Please call the Radiology department on **0116 258 8765** and select **option 5**.

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, but not on bank holidays.

References:

<https://www.informed-scan.com/radiation-risk/pregnancy>



اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
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Previous reference:

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