

Chest X-Ray

Why is it done ?

A chest X-ray is the most common radiology test. You may need your chest X-rayed if you have chest pain, a persistent cough, a heart or lung disorder, a pacemaker and more. Risks are very low and you won't feel anything. Be sure to let the radiology technologist performing the test if you are or may be pregnant.

How to prepare: There is no special preparation for your chest X-ray. You will be asked to remove any necklaces and any metal you may have around your chest area. If female, you will be asked to remove your bra and put on a patient gown.

Please tell the technologist if you have an insulin pump.

What to expect during the test: A chest X-ray is a test that uses a small amount of radiation to create an image of the structures within your chest, including your heart, lungs, blood vessels and bones. During an X-ray, a focused beam of radiation is passed through your body and a black-and-white image is recorded on special film or a computer. The X-ray image that is created looks like a negative from a black-and-white photograph.

How does a chest X-ray work?

X-rays work because your body's tissues vary in density (thickness). Each tissue allows a different amount of radiation to pass through and expose the X-ray-sensitive detectors, which results in a shadow image of your organs. Your bones, for example, are very dense, and most of the radiation is prevented from passing through to the detector. As a result, your bones appear white on an X-ray. Tissues that are less dense — such as your lungs — allow more of the X-rays to pass through to the detector and appear on the image in shades of gray.

The following are visible on an X-ray:

- Bones.
- Lungs.
- Fluid in or around your lungs.
- Air surrounding your lungs.
- Blood vessels.
- Heart.
- Aorta. (Your largest artery, which is connected to your heart.)
- Calcium deposits.
- Fractures. (Broken bones.)
- Pacemakers.

Why is a chest X-ray used?

A chest X-ray may be used to help diagnose and plan treatment for various conditions, including:

- Lung disorders such as pneumonia, emphysema, tuberculosis and lung cancer.
- Heart disorders such as congestive heart failure (which causes the heart to enlarge).
- Fractures (breaks) of the bones in the chest, including the ribs and collarbone as well as breaks in the bones of the upper spine.
- Reasons for shortness of breath, a bad or persistent cough or chest pain.
- Fever.

Your healthcare provider might also order a chest X-ray as a precaution before surgery.

Where are chest X-rays performed?

The hospital, whether outpatient, inpatient, or Emergency department. One of our many outpatient sites that are listed on the website. Also, any of the the FastERCare sites.

How long does the test last?

Plan on about five minutes for the test. This includes time for preparation, positioning, processing the images.

What to expect after the test:

- you can resume your usual activities and normal diet immediately.
- The results of your exam should be available to your physician within 24-48 hours after the test, Monday through Friday.
- Your physician will discuss the test results with you.