

The Safety of X-Rays During Pregnancy



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IS IT SAFE TO HAVE X-RAYS WHILE I'M PREGNANT?

Current medical research provides no indication that the radiation doses received from diagnostic x-ray procedures during a pregnancy increases the incidents of fetal abnormalities above those that occur spontaneously. If your doctor finds you need x-rays for a medical problem or injury, current medical evidence suggests it is safe to have them. It is better for your baby and for you to be healthy and in some circumstances your medical problem may be more harmful to your baby than the x-rays.

WHAT ARE X-RAYS?

X-rays are an invisible form of radiation used to make pictures of the bones and organs of your body.

DO ALL TYPES OF X-RAY PROCEDURES HAVE THE SAME AMOUNT OF RADIATION?

No. Different types of procedures have different amounts of radiation associated with them. Medical x-rays use very small amounts of radiation. Your medical team which includes your physician, the radiologist and the technologist will ensure only those procedures that are absolutely necessary are done and with the least amount of risk to both you and your baby. During an average pregnancy the

fetus will be exposed to 0.1 rads (a measurement of radiation) of naturally occurring radiation from things such as the sun and the ground and buildings that surround us. A diagnostic x-ray such as a chest x-ray generally gives the fetus a dose of less than 0.01 rads.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF AFTER I'VE HAD AN X-RAY I FIND OUT I'M PREGNANT?

You really don't need to do anything. The risk to your baby from the radiation from most x-ray procedures is so small most physicians will treat your pregnancy just like any other pregnancy. If you are concerned, you should talk to your doctor who can determine exactly what type of procedure you have had and what, if any, radiation exposure your baby may have received.

CAN I REFUSE TO HAVE AN X-RAY?

Yes. A patient always has the right to refuse any procedure at any time. Before refusing the procedures ordered you need to consider and understand the consequences of not having the test done on your health. Your doctor may wish to talk to you or have another physician such as a radiologist talk to you regarding your decision to help them understand and respond to any concerns you have.