

Chest X-Ray

Overview

A chest x-ray takes images of is the chest, lungs, heart, large arteries, ribs, and diaphragm.

It may be ordered:

- as a routine pre-operative test
- when symptoms are present such as a persistent cough, coughing up blood, chest pain, or difficulty breathing
- if chest disease is suspected
- if chest injury has occurred

Serial chest X-rays may be used to evaluate changes that have occurred since the previous X-ray(s) was taken.

Before the X-ray

- Inform your health care provider if you are pregnant. Chest x-rays are generally avoided during the 1st and 2nd trimesters of pregnancy (the first six months).
- You must wear a hospital gown and remove all your jewelry.

During the X-ray

You will be asked to stand in front of the x-ray machine, pressing your chest against the film plate. The film plate may be cold, but there should be no other discomfort. The technician will ask you to hold your breath while the x-rays are taken. Usually, this will involve two views: one in which the x-rays pass through the chest from the back (posterior-anterior view), and one in which the x-rays pass through the chest from one side to the other (lateral view).

Risks

There is low radiation exposure. X-rays are monitored and regulated to provide the minimum amount of radiation exposure needed to produce the image. Most experts feel that the risk is very low compared with the benefits.

Pregnant women and children are more sensitive to the risks of the x-ray.