

## Chest X-rays

### *How to prepare and what to expect*

*This handout explains how chest X-rays work, how to prepare, what to expect, and how to get your results.*

### **What is a chest X-ray?**

An X-ray (radiology exam) is a medical test that produces images (pictures) of a part of a body. These images help doctors diagnose health conditions.

Doctors use chest X-rays to assess the lungs, heart, and chest wall. This exam can help diagnose pneumonia, heart failure, emphysema, lung cancer, and other medical problems.

### **How does the exam work?**

An X-ray machine is like a camera. But, it uses X-rays instead of light to create images. When the machine is turned on, X-rays pass through the part of the body that is being studied. Your doctor will view the X-ray images on a computer screen.

### **How do I prepare?**

- You do not need to prepare in any special way for chest X-rays.
- *Women:* Tell your doctor or X-ray technologist if there is any chance that you may be pregnant.

### **How is the exam done?**

- First, we will ask you to:
  - Change into a hospital gown
  - Remove jewelry, glasses, and any metal objects that could show up on the pictures



*Talk with your referring provider about the results of your chest X-ray exam.*

- For most chest X-rays, you will stand with your chest pressed to the X-ray machine, with your hands on your hips and your shoulders pushed forward.
- If you cannot stand, a special X-ray machine will be used that allows you to sit or lie.
- The technologist will then leave the room.
- The technologist will talk with you through an intercom and ask you to be still, to take a deep breath, and hold it while the X-ray is being taken. This reduces the chance of blurring the image.
- You will hear the X-ray machine turn on and off. While it is on, it will send a beam of X-rays through your body to expose the film.
- The technologist may need to take more views to see all parts of your chest, or may take a side view of your chest. For the side view, you will stand with your side to the plate, with your arms up.
- Views from other angles may be taken if the radiologist needs to check more areas of the chest.
- If needed, a chest X-ray may be repeated hours, days, or months later to check for any changes.
- When your X-rays are done, the technologist will ask you to wait until they check to make sure they have clear images.

### **What will I feel during the exam?**

- X-ray exams should not cause pain. You may feel some discomfort from having the cold plate against your chest.
- People with arthritis or injuries to the chest wall, shoulders, or arms may feel discomfort trying to hold a position for the chest X-ray. If you are uncomfortable, 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 who is skilled in chest X-ray and other types of radiology exams. The radiologist will review your results and send a report to your primary care or referring provider. The radiologist will not talk with you about your X-ray images.

Your own provider will give you your results. You may also read your results on your eCare Results page. If you need copies of your images on disc, call 206.598.6206.

You and your provider will decide the next step, such as treatment for a problem, as needed.

#### **Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- UWMC Imaging Services: 206.598.6200
- HMC Imaging Services: 206.744.3105