



Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

Radiology Services: Having an X-ray

Your doctor or a clinical specialist has recommended you have an X-ray to investigate a potential problem. This leaflet aims to help you understand what is involved and the possible risks associated with X-rays. It should not replace informed discussion between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such discussions. If you have any questions about the procedure please ask the doctor or healthcare professional who has referred you for the test, or the department that is going to perform it.

What is an X-ray?

X-rays are similar to light, except they have a much higher frequency, which makes them invisible to the naked eye. An X-ray is a widely used diagnostic test, to examine the inside of the body by forming an image. Examinations are usually carried out in hospital X-ray departments by trained specialists called radiographers.

Why should I have an X-ray?

An X-ray can give information that leads to or helps make a diagnosis about your medical condition. X-rays can also be used to monitor existing conditions. It is a very effective way of looking at the bones and can be used to help detect a range of conditions.



Are there any risks?

X-rays are a type of radiation known as ionising radiation. The dose that you get from a medical X-ray is very low and the associated risks are very low. They are similar in strength to other sources of natural radiation that people are exposed to every day without even realising it.

The radiographer (the health care professional who operates the imaging equipment) is responsible for making sure that your dose is kept as low as possible and that the benefits of the X-ray outweigh the risks.

Details of radiation risk from common X-rays are displayed in all RBFT radiology departments.

Patients of childbearing capacity: Radiation can be harmful for an unborn baby. If you are or think you may be pregnant, you must tell the radiographer before the X-ray. For some examinations, the radiographer may ask you about your pregnancy status before the X-ray.

Please remember X-ray used for this application only gives a small amount of radiation and your doctor feels this X-ray is a necessary investigation. You are entitled to ask as many questions as you want to ensure you are comfortable with the procedure.

Preparation for the X-ray

If you were given a form from the doctor who referred you for an X-ray, such as your GP, please bring this with you. It helps us check you in quicker. Do not worry if you do not have one, our reception team can find your electronic request for those patients who were assessed over the telephone. Your GP practice may email you your referral for reassurance.

Various items of clothing can affect the quality of the X-ray. If you do not wish to wear a hospital gown, then please do not wear clothing with zips, metal, sequins, beads, buttons or that are made of thick material. You may also be asked to remove jewellery, dentures, spectacles, and any metal objects or clothing that might interfere with the X-ray images. The items that need removing will depend on the type of examination that you are having.

You may bring a relative or friend with you to the X-ray department when you have your X-rays, although they will not usually be allowed into the X-ray room. Those who need to accompany patients (e.g. carers, interpreters) will need to go behind a protective screen when the X-rays are taken.



If you have a medical condition which you feel may affect your safety in the department, or if you feel you may need any assistance, please let us know either before you attend or as soon as you arrive.

What happens when I arrive?

You will need to check in at the reception desk in the X-ray (Radiology) Department. The receptionist or care assistant will take your X-ray request form and direct you to a waiting area. A radiographer or another member of staff will call you to an examination room when they are ready to start your X-ray.

If you need to undress for the procedure, you will first be shown to a private cubicle to change into the hospital gown provided. Please keep any valuables with you or use the lockable lockers if available.

What happens during the X-ray examination?

Your X-ray will be performed by a radiographer (a registered health professional trained in the use of X-rays), or an assistant practitioner (trained to undertake X-ray examinations). We also have student and apprentice radiographers training with us in the department. All staff will introduce themselves accordingly.



You will be taken into an X-ray room where the radiographer will explain the procedure and ask you to confirm your name, address and birth date.

During an X-ray, you'll usually be asked to lie on a table or stand against a flat surface so that the part of your body being examined can be positioned in the right place.

The X-ray machine will be carefully aimed at the part of the body being examined by the radiographer. They will operate the machine from behind a screen or from the next room. The X-ray will last for a fraction of a second. You won't feel anything while it is carried out. Where possible, please keep as still as possible so the image produced isn't blurred.

Giving your consent (permission)

The radiographer / assistant practitioner will ask you if you are happy for the X-ray to go ahead. This is a form of verbal consent and may only involve the radiographer / assistant practitioner checking that you are booked for the correct X-ray.

If you do not wish to have the X-ray, or are undecided, please ask the radiographer so that they can answer any questions you have.

How long will the process take?

The process of taking the image will only last a few minutes but the radiographer may need to take further X-rays in different positions, depending on the body part and the complexity of the images requested by your doctor.

Waiting times for X-rays will vary, depending on the number of clinics running and GP referrals attending when you arrive. Not all examinations can be done in every room which may also affect your waiting time. Patients are prioritised by clinical urgency. Patients may not be called in order of arrival.

The radiographer may ask you to wait in the department while they check that no further X-ray pictures are required. As soon as the radiographer is satisfied that no more X-rays are needed, you will be free to leave the department.



Results

The radiographer will not be able to give you any results at the time of the procedure. The X-ray pictures will be studied by a health professional trained in reading X-rays and the results will be sent to the clinician who referred you.

The radiographer or assistant practitioner will explain to you how you will receive your results and how long it will take. This may be different for each patient but you can expect your results to be with your doctor or healthcare professional in approximately 5 to 10 working days.

Our services:

For full details regarding our GP appointment-based services please refer to the Trust leaflet called [RBFT Radiology: GP X-ray referrals: Appointment-based services](#).

Royal Berkshire Hospital GP Appointment only service: Open: 8am – 4:30pm Days: Monday – Friday. Closed at weekends and Bank Holidays. If you can no longer attend your appointment, please let us know either via SwiftQueue or by calling us on 0118 322 7991.	West Berkshire Community Hospital GP Appointment only service: Open: 8:30am – 4:30pm Monday – Friday and 9am – 4pm on Saturday Days: Monday – Saturday. Closed at Sundays and Bank Holidays. If you can no longer attend your appointment, please let us know either via SwiftQueue or by calling us on 01635 273380.
Royal Berkshire Bracknell Healthspace GP Appointment only service: Open: 8am – 7:30pm Days: 7 days a week, including Bank Holidays. If you can no longer attend your appointment, please let us know either via SwiftQueue or by calling us and leaving a message with your name and contact details on 01344 662928.	Townlands Memorial Hospital GP Appointment only service: Open: 8.30am – 4:30pm Days: Monday – Friday. Closed at weekends and Bank Holidays. If you can no longer attend your appointment, please let us know either via SwiftQueue or by calling us and leaving a message with your name and contact details on 01865 903086.

Contact us

If there is anything you don't understand or if you have any further questions or concerns please speak with your referring doctor or clinical specialist to discuss your referral.

If you would like to give feedback – positive or negative, please complete a survey regarding the department you visited by at www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/surveys or telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0118 322 8338 to get a paper questionnaire sent to you.

You can also post feedback into any of the suggestion boxes around the hospital or email your feedback to PALS.

To access additional patient information or find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Next review due: July 2028