

Abdominal X-Ray

An abdominal x ray is a medical procedure whereby a radiology technologist takes photos of the inside of your abdomen or stomach.

With any medical procedure there can be fear associated with it. For people with intellectual disabilities, this fear can be even more extreme, simply because they are not sure of what is going to happen to them. This website will take you through the journey of getting an abdominal x-ray. It will outline the major steps involved as well as giving some educational material on what an x-ray is and what you need to do before, and after, an abdominal x-ray.

What is an Abdominal X-Ray?

An x ray is a medical test that uses radiation to look at the inner structures or organs of the body. It examines organs such as the large and small intestines, stomach, liver, spleen, and diaphragm, the muscle that separates the chest cavity and the abdominal cavity. The x-rays are then interpreted by a doctor (called a radiologist) who specializes in evaluating imaging tests.

Why do you need to have an Abdominal X-Ray?

There are many reasons why your doctor might order an abdominal x-ray. They are:

- diagnose the source of nausea, vomiting, pain, abdominal swelling and other symptoms related to the abdomen
- identify suspected urinary system problems
- identify a tumour or blockage
- examine whether there is air or fluid in the peritoneal space (the space surrounding the abdominal organs).

What happens during an Abdominal X-Ray?

Initially you will be asked to change from your clothes into a gown. You will then lie flat on your back underneath an x-ray machine while the x-ray is taken. After the x-ray machine is positioned over your abdomen, you will be asked to hold your breath while the x-ray pictures are taken. You need to lie very still to avoid blurring the pictures. You may be asked to change positions for more x-rays (e.g., on your stomach or even standing).

What do I need to do after the Abdominal X-Ray?

You do not need to do anything specific after the abdominal x-ray. You can resume your normal activity as soon as the test is finished.

What are the Risks in having an Abdominal X-Ray?

There are very low levels of radiation used in this test. There is always a slight risk of damage to cells or tissue from being exposed to any level of radiation.

However, the risk of damage from x-rays is usually very low. There is no anaesthesia used in an x-ray.

Understanding Abdominal X-Rays

You should be aware about your own medical care. When a test is ordered for you, it is good to know why the test is ordered, how it will be done, and what the doctor expects to learn from it. Here are some good questions to ask:

- Why does this test need to be done? How could it change the course of my care?
- What do you (the client or caregiver) need to know, or do before the test?
- What happens during and after the test?
- How much will the test hurt or be an inconvenience? What are the risks?
- How long will the test take? When will results be available?
- Where do you need to go to take the test? Is there a "good" time to schedule the test?
- What are normal results for my test? What do abnormal results mean?
- What factors may affect the results?
- What course of action may be next, after the test?