

What you need to know about...

Radiography of the Abdomen

An x-ray examination of the abdomen produces radiographic images of the kidney, urinary bladder, gas patterns of the bowel and the lower outline of the liver. This examination is ordered when patients have experienced an injury to the abdominal area or are experiencing abdominal pain.

Patient Preparation

Before your examination, a radiographer will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you might have. A radiographer, also known as a radiologic technologist, is a skilled medical professional who has received specialized education in the areas of radiation protection, patient care, radiation exposure, radiographic positioning and radiographic procedures. As part of his or her duties, the radiographer will determine the amount of radiation necessary to produce a diagnostically useful image.

The radiographer will ask you to put on a hospital gown and to remove any jewelry underneath it. This gown has no metal snaps on it, because metal can interfere with the accuracy of the image.

If you are a woman of childbearing age, the radiographer will ask if there is any possibility you are pregnant. It is important that you tell the radiographer the date of your last menstrual period and whether there is a chance that you may be pregnant.

During the Examination

You probably will be asked to lie

down on the x-ray table, although in some cases the radiograph will be taken while you are standing. To ensure that you are properly positioned on the table, the radiographer will look for anatomical landmarks. He or she will touch the sides of your abdomen and your pelvic bones to



position you correctly. You will be asked to hold your breath while the exposure is made. It is important not to move during the exposure, because any movement will blur the image.

A lead-equivalent rubberized shield might be used to cover your reproductive organs, unless its use would interfere with the examination. Sometimes the area that needs to be examined would be hidden if a shield were used.

Once the examination is complete, the radiographer will determine whether the images are technically acceptable and assess whether additional images are needed. The images then will be

given to a radiologist, a physician who specializes in the diagnostic interpretation of medical images.

Postexamination Information

After your radiographs have been reviewed by a radiologist, your personal physician will receive a report of the findings. Your physician then will advise you of the results and discuss what further procedures, if any, are needed.

The radiation that you are exposed to during this examination, like the radiation produced during any other x-ray procedure, passes through you immediately. ♦

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