Awali Hospital

Energising your health

General Radiography (X-ray)

Radiology Department

General Radiography

A general radiography (x-ray) can be done on the chest, abdomen, pelvis, skull and limb. It involves exposing a part of the body to a small dose of radiation to produce an image of the internal organs.

When x-rays penetrate the body, they are absorbed in varying amounts by different parts of the anatomy. Ribs and bones, for example, will absorb much of the radiation and, therefore, appear white or light grey on the image. Lung tissue and other internal organs absorb lesser radiation and appear darker on the image. In this manner, a “picture” of the body part is formed.

Common Uses of General Radiography

- Chest and bone x-rays are common examinations.
- A chest x-ray is usually done for the evaluation of lungs, heart and surrounding anatomy.
- Bone x-ray is the fastest and easiest way for a physician to view and assess broken bones, cracked skull and injured backbone. At least two films are taken of a bone, and often three films if the problem is around a joint (knee, elbow or wrist).

Preparation

The procedure requires no special preparation. As x-rays are involved, this procedure is not advisable for pregnant women, especially in early pregnancy.

To prevent unnecessary irradiation of foetus, female patients will be asked of their last menstrual period. This is strictly important in the examination of the lower abdomen and pelvis. Generally, 10 days from the beginning of the last menstrual period is considered a safe period for x-ray examinations.

Procedures

You may be requested to change into an x-ray gown to avoid metallic items, buttons and zippers. You will also be asked to remove jewellery, eyeglasses, and any metal objects that could obscure the image.

Once you are positioned in the required pose with the x-ray plate, you may be asked to take a deep breath and hold it or just to hold your breath and keep still. The radiographer will go to another small room or cubicle and activate the x-ray equipment which will send a beam of x-rays to the positioned area. You need to keep still as any movement will lead to an unsharp picture and an accurate diagnosis cannot be made.

When the x-rays are completed you will be asked to wait until the radiographer and radiologist examine the images to determine if more are needed.

BENEFITS

X-ray imaging is useful to diagnose bone and joint injury and disease, such as fractures, infections, arthritis and cancer.

Because x-ray imaging is fast and easy, it is particularly useful in emergency diagnosis and treatment.

X-ray equipment is relatively inexpensive and widely available in physician offices, ambulatory care centres, nursing homes and other locations, making it convenient for both patients and physicians.

RISKS

Exposure to x-radiation. During a single x-ray exposure, a patient is exposed to about 0.06-2mSv of radiation dose. To put this into perspective, we are all exposed to approximately 3mSv of radiation dose each year from sources like the ultraviolet rays of the sun and small traces of radioactive isotopes, such as uranium found in soil.

Women should always inform their doctor or x-ray technologist if there is any possibility that they are pregnant.

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