

Chest X-rays

What is it?

The chest X-ray gives the pediatric cardiologist information about your child's lungs and the heart's size and shape. A chest X-ray doesn't show the inside structures of the heart though.

How is it done?

A technologist positions your child (a hospital gown may be worn over the chest) next to the X-ray film. Older children will be asked to hold their breath and be very still for two or three seconds; infants may require some restraint. An X-ray machine will be turned on for a fraction of a second. During this time, a small beam of X-rays passes through the chest and makes an image on special photographic film. Sometimes two pictures are taken — a front and side view. The X-ray film takes about 10 minutes to develop. Sometimes your cardiologist needs more than just the front and side chest X-rays.

Does it hurt?

No, it doesn't. You won't feel the X-rays as the pictures are taken.

Is it harmful?

The amount of radiation used in a chest X-ray is very small — one-fifth the dose a person gets each year from natural sources such as the sun and ground. This small amount of radiation isn't considered dangerous.