Chest X-rays

What is it?
The chest X-ray gives the cardiologist information about your lungs and the heart’s size and shape. A chest X-ray doesn’t show the inside structures of the heart though.

Why is it done?
A chest X-ray shows the location, size and shape of the heart, lungs and the blood vessels.

How is it done?
A technologist positions you (a hospital gown may be worn over the chest) next to the X-ray film. 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.