

SHED THE SHIELD

Patient FAQs

Why do you not shield patients anymore?

Patient shielding has been used for more than 70 years. We now have better equipment that uses much less radiation and operates differently. We also know more about how radiation affects the human body and that some parts of the body—like the testicles and ovaries—are less sensitive to radiation than we used to think.

Most modern X-ray, fluoroscopy and CT machines can automatically determine how much radiation to use based on the part of the body being imaged. If a shield gets in the way, it could mean an increase in radiation dose.

Since we now have equipment that can give us better information using less radiation than in the past, patient shields are no longer beneficial. Our state-of-the-art equipment uses industry leading radiation-dose reduction technology. Also, our radiology experts perform quality measures to ensure all of our diagnostic imaging technology uses the lowest levels of radiation possible for our patients' exams.

Doesn't shielding make me safer?

The amount of radiation used in most imaging exams is so small that shields provide negligible protection.

What's the harm in shielding?

When the reproductive organs are far away from the part of your body being imaged, there is no benefit from using shielding. When the part of your body receiving X-rays is close to your reproductive organs, a shield may cover up parts of your body that your doctor needs to be able to see. If this happens, we may have to repeat your exam.

Won't radiation exposure to my sperm or ovaries harm my future children?

Since the 1950s, people were concerned that radiation might damage sperm or eggs and that this damage would be passed down to your future children. However, this has never been seen in humans even after many generations (years) of studying it closely. This is true even for people who have been exposed to much larger amounts of radiation than what is used in medical imaging.

What if I'm pregnant?

We have equipment that can give us better information than ever before and can get good images using much less radiation than in the past. However, placing shielding over your belly can reduce the quality of the exam if it gets into the image and in some cases can increase the overall dose from the exam. Since shielding your belly provides no benefit to your baby, it is better to not do it.

Will you still shield me if I want you to?

We do not recommend using lead shielding during imaging exams. Some exams can never be done using a shield because the shield would cover up parts of the body we need to see. But, if you insist that we use a shield, we will honor your request if it is possible to do so without compromising the exam you are having.

FOR PARENTS

Why is my child not shielded now?

Shields have been used in the past, but we know more about radiation now and have imaging equipment that uses much less radiation than in the past. We have also seen that shields can cover up parts of your child's body that are important for your doctor to see.

Why is my child not shielded if I am required to wear a lead apron while I am in the room with them?

Your child's doctor wants an image so that he or she can better see what is going on inside your child's body. This exposes your child to a little bit of radiation. Your doctor has thought about the benefits and risks to your child. He or she has decided that the benefit from having the information from the image is much greater than the risk from the radiation, which is minimal. Because you aren't being imaged, there is no need for you to get any radiation and so we give you an apron to wear to make sure that you don't get any dose.

My child previously had an imaging exam where shielding was used, why the change in practice?

Patient shields have been used for more than 70 years. A lot has changed since then. We have better machines that use much less radiation. We also know more about how radiation affects the human body. Some parts of the body—like the testicles and ovaries—are much less sensitive to radiation than we used to think, thus there is no benefit from placing shields on your child.

Can I ask for a shield for my child?

We do not recommend using lead shielding during imaging exams. Some exams can never be done using a shield because it would always cover parts of the body we need to see. But, if you insist that we use a shield, we will honor your request if it is possible to do so without compromising the exam your child is having.

Source: *The American Association of*