X-RAY TESTS AND PREGNANCY

Background

Pregnant women often worry that X-ray tests may harm their baby. No single X-ray test is dangerous to an unborn child.

How X-ray Tests Affect Pregnancy

Chest X-rays, dental X-rays and mammograms only expose the baby to a tiny amount of radiation. For example, even if a woman has 1,000 chest X-rays or 10 mammograms during her pregnancy, her baby is still safe. An X-ray of the hip or belly also exposes the baby to only a small dose. Even tests that use more radiation, such as a CT scan of the belly, do not increase the risk of birth defects or miscarriage.

How Pregnancy Affects X-ray Tests

When X-rays are needed, special care can be taken to lower the baby’s exposure. When possible, a lead shield is placed over the uterus. Health care providers also consider ultrasound or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) tests when evaluating pregnant women. These tests do not use X-rays and do not pose any risk to the baby.

What You Can Do

1) Let your health care provider know that you are or may be pregnant.

2) Ask whether an ultrasound or MRI is a good alternative to X-ray tests.

3) If you need X-rays, remind the staff to place a shield over your uterus. This should be done unless an X-ray of your belly is needed.

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