

For Imaging Patients

Imaging During Pregnancy: What You Should Know

Easy-to-read information for patients who are pregnant or may be pregnant

If your doctor has recommended an X-ray, CT scan, or nuclear medicine study, the goal is to get important medical information while keeping radiation as low as possible. Many medically necessary imaging exams can still be done safely during pregnancy when needed.

What is the main message?

- Fetal doses below 50 mGy from diagnostic imaging have not been associated with known birth defects or developmental problems.
- Most routine diagnostic exams deliver much less than this amount.
- When the abdomen or pelvis is directly imaged, the main possible concern is usually a very small increase in the child's future cancer risk.
- Your care team may consider ultrasound or MRI when those tests can answer the question without radiation.

How your exam may be discussed

Exam type	What patients should know
Abdominal, lumbar, or pelvic X-ray	These exams usually use a low dose. Harmful developmental effects are not expected from routine diagnostic X-rays.
Abdominal or pelvic CT scan	CT uses more radiation than an X-ray, but a single diagnostic CT is still usually below levels linked to known developmental harm. It may still be recommended when important for diagnosis or urgent care.
Nuclear medicine study	The fetal dose depends on the tracer used. Many diagnostic studies are still low dose, but these exams are reviewed more carefully in pregnancy. In our policy, all nuclear medicine studies except a lung scan are reconsidered if a patient is pregnant.

Questions you can ask: Is this exam necessary right now? Are there options such as ultrasound or MRI? If radiation is needed, what is being done to keep the dose as low as possible?

Please tell your technologist, nurse, or provider if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant before the exam.

Bibliography: Based on AtlantiCare Policy & Procedure 2638, Documentation of Pregnancy Status (revised 1/2026), and the ACR-SPR Practice Guideline for Imaging Pregnant or Potentially Pregnant Adolescents and Women With Ionizing Radiation (revised 2013).