

Changes to patient shielding

Effective January 28, 2025, Oak Valley Health diagnostics services will no longer be using lead shielding on patients undergoing any exam that uses X-rays.

This change reflects advancements in X-ray technology and health care safety, and aligns with changes at other hospitals in Canada. This practice is no longer considered effective and is not recommended by medical professionals and organizations around the world, including the Canadian Association of Radiologists.

Your safety is our top priority. We are committed to providing extraordinary care and always putting patients first.

We continuously update our practices to ensure we are using the most effective and safest methods available, and staff are trained to position you to see the right anatomy and use the correct and lowest level of radiation. If you have further questions or concerns, please direct them to your care team.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why have shielding guidelines changed?

According to Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists, in 70 years of research, no studies have proven harmful effects of X-rays on reproductive organs or the fetus, we now know that the human body is not as sensitive to radiation as we used to believe, and patients receive 20 to 25 times less radiation today.

What are the safety/health care benefits?

While it was once commonly used, shielding can interfere with image quality, distort anatomy, and disrupt modern imaging systems that automatically adjust exposure. This can reduce the accuracy of the exam and may even increase the patient's radiation dose. Today's equipment uses sensors that determine how many X-rays are needed to create a good image.

Shielding doesn't significantly lower the main source of secondary radiation (internal scatter). As a result, its benefits are minimal, and the risks outweigh any potential advantages.

What's the harm in shielding?

Modern research and advanced imaging technology show that shielding no longer provides significant protection. In fact, it can interfere with the quality of the X-ray image and may even increase your exposure to radiation.

Today's equipment uses very low doses of radiation, and the benefits of the exam far outweigh any potential risks. You are receiving much less radiation now than in the past.

Where is shielding no longer necessary?

This practice applies to patient undergoing diagnostic imaging procedures, using X-ray equipment, including, computed tomography (CT), general radiography (X-ray), bone densitometry, fluoroscopy, and more.

What if I am pregnant or my child needs an X-ray?

Not shielding your belly or your child does not put your loved ones at harm. X-ray equipment provides better information than ever before and can capture quality images using much less radiation than in the past. Shielding could cover up the part of the body that the doctor needs to see. If this happens, the X-ray may have to be repeated, resulting in another dose of radiation.

What if I still want to be shielded?

We understand medical procedures can be concerning. Please know all decisions we make are based on the best available evidence and designed to keep you safe. Shielding may be provided to those that request additional protection, as long as it does not interfere with the imaging procedure or potentially compromise clinical objectives. Patients are encouraged to take the time to discuss shielding with their medical radiation technologist.

Why are staff continuing to wear shielding?

Staff wear shielding because they are at higher risk of repeated cumulative exposure, as they are exposed to X-rays every day, several times a day.