

What you need to know about...

Tracing the X-ray Trail



If you've just completed an x-ray, computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance (MR) or other diagnostic imaging procedure, you probably want to know when you will find out your results and what your images show. They're pretty natural questions because most people want to know what, if anything, is wrong with them.

Start here!



1

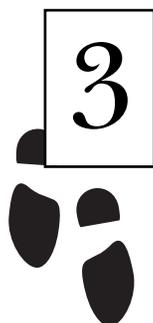
The process of getting results actually begins when your physician determines that diagnostic imaging will provide more information on which to base a diagnosis or treatment plan. The radiology department or imaging center receives a request from your physician, specifying the type of exam needed, reason for the exam and any special instructions.



2

If you've had a prior imaging study of the same part of the body, the radiology department will try to obtain your old images before the procedure.

Previous imaging studies are useful for comparison with current films. You may be asked to sign a release form if your films are located at another facility.



3

Before the exam, the radiologic technologist verifies the imaging order to determine which specific techniques should be used. These specially trained professionals perform the procedure and process the films. The quality of a diagnostic image depends on their skill and expertise. Although the radiologic technologist cannot tell you the outcome of your exam, he or she can give you some idea when the results will be reported to your physician.



5

Your diagnostic images are a part of your medical record. Although they are your private personal information, the facility where your exam was performed has physical control over them. If you move or change physicians, you must authorize their release to have the films transferred. Be aware that the length of time medical records are kept varies from state to state and from institution to institution.



4

Once the exam is completed, the radiologist, a physician who is trained to read diagnostic images, examines the films.

The radiologist dictates a report describing the techniques used to acquire the image, the reason for the exam, relevant patient history and what the films show. The report then is sent to the ordering physician who will discuss the results with you.

This patient education page provides general information concerning the radiologic sciences. The ASRT suggests that you consult your physician for specific information concerning your imaging exam and medical condition. Health care professionals may reproduce these pages for noncommercial educational purposes. Reproduction for other reasons is subject to ASRT approval.



For more information, contact the American Society of Radiologic Technologists, 15000 Central Ave. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87123-3917, or visit us online at www.asrt.org