What is an X-ray?

An X-ray is a common imaging test that's been used for decades. It can help your doctor view the inside of your body without having to make an incision. This can help them diagnose, monitor, and treat many medical conditions.

Different types of X-rays are used for different purposes. For example, your doctor may order a mammogram to examine your breasts. Or they may order an X-ray with a barium enema to get a closer look at your gastrointestinal tract.

There are some risks involved in getting an X-ray. But for most people, the potential benefits outweigh the risks. Talk to your doctor to learn more about what is right for you.

Why is an X-ray performed?

Your doctor may order an X-ray to:

- examine an area where you're experiencing pain or discomfort
- monitor the progression of a diagnosed disease, such as osteoporosis
- check how well a prescribed treatment is working

Conditions that may call for an X-ray include:

- bone cancer
- breast tumors
- enlarged heart
- blocked blood vessels
- conditions affecting your lungs
- digestive problems
- fractures
- infections

- osteoporosis
- arthritis
- tooth decay
- needing to retrieve swallowed items