

Patient Shielding Policy



What change is happening?

On your next visit you will not be covered by a lead apron. This is a change to a decades' long policy of shielding patients with a lead apron during exams which utilize radiation, including X-rays.

Why is this change happening?

Patient lead shields were initially recommended during the 1950's when a study on fruit flies prompted concern that radiation might damage DNA and cause birth defects. During the past decade, prominent radiology and medical physics experts have researched and reassessed the practice of using lead shields. We now know much more about how radiation affects the human body. Studies have shown that the effects of radiation on fruit flies do not correspond with its effect on humans or other animals. We also have seen advances in equipment and technology that uses much less radiation and operates more efficiently. In fact, some of the features of modern imaging equipment do not perform as intended when lead shielding is in the path of the beam.

These advances in technology and knowledge have made patient shielding a practice that introduces more risk than benefit. This is true regardless of the patient's age, sex, or pregnancy status. Despite the overwhelming evidence against it, the practice of shielding patients is only now being discontinued. This is a change not only happening locally but in the radiology community at large.

Where can I get more information?

If you have additional questions, please visit our website at www.ohsu.edu/radiology or ask the radiologic technologist performing your exam. They are ready and happy to address your concerns or direct you to other resources, if needed.

November 1, 2020:
OHSU will no longer use lead aprons on patients undergoing exams which utilize radiation.