Frequently Asked Questions – Patients:
Patient Shielding for Diagnostic Imaging

Why are you no longer shielding patients?
Patient shielding has been in use for roughly 70 years. Over that time, technology has improved greatly, so that we can obtain high-quality X-rays with far less radiation. We also know far more about how the human body is affected by radiation. Parts of the body that we used to shield, like the ovaries and testicles, are not as sensitive to radiation as we used to think. In some situations, shielding may interfere with obtaining a high-quality X-ray. For all these reasons, patient shielding will no longer be used routinely.

Doesn't shielding reduce my risk?
With current technology, we can obtain high-quality X-rays with very small amounts of radiation. The risk from this radiation is negligible. Shielding does not provide any real benefit.

Won't multiple X-rays over my lifetime put me at greater risk of developing cancer?
Healthy cells repair themselves after exposure to small doses of radiation, and cells do not become more sensitive to radiation after multiple exposures. For example, radiation therapy takes advantage of this by splitting treatments up into multiple smaller sessions, allowing healthy cells time to recover between treatments. Shielding use does not affect how cells repair themselves.

If my sperm or ovaries are exposed to radiation, will that affect my future children?
One of the reasons that shielding was initially adopted in the 1950's was that people were concerned radiation might damage their sperm or eggs and that this would impact their children. There has been no scientific evidence since then to demonstrate these kinds of effects in humans, even for those exposed to much higher doses of radiation than are used in diagnostic imaging.

What happens if I am pregnant or think I may be pregnant?
Shielding your belly does not provide any significant benefit to your baby. You will still be asked about your pregnancy status, but that is unrelated to the use of shielding.

Will you still shield me if I want you to?
We base our clinical practice on scientific evidence. The evidence says that shielding provides negligible benefits. If you insist on having shielding during your exam, it will be provided so long as it doesn't interfere with obtaining high-quality X-rays.

https://sharedhealthmb.ca/services/diagnostic/patient-shielding/