

TOO MUCH X-RAY EXPOSURE?

I can now relax knowing that the fall risk in all of our readers has been greatly reduced, if not eliminated. I hope!

I didn't want to scare you too much, but it is a huge problem and we always think it will happen to someone else. So we don't worry about it, but someone has to worry about it to change things for the better. I trust we did that.

Today we want to address a more silent problem you should be aware of to stay healthy.

Americans are the most imaged population in the world. I'm speaking of the whole range of x-ray studies available today. The list is very long. Doctors seem very willing to use all the new technology and patients often ask that certain tests be done that they have heard about.

The subject today is the CAT scan. By the way CAT is short for computed axial tomography. But you already knew that, right? Sure.

CT is not new by any means, but are you aware that there is a significant x-ray exposure with CT studies. The patient is scanned with x-rays and the computer makes 3 dimensional images of organs that provide far greater detail than plain films.

For example, a CT exam of the chest exposes the patient to more than 100 times the radiation you get from a standard chest x-ray. CT is often used in Emergency Room settings to get information quickly about head injuries and abdominal problems.

Our intention is not to frighten patients away from a test that could possibly provide a lifesaving diagnosis. When a scan is done the right way for the right reason the benefits clearly outweigh the risk of doing it.

We want our patients to be educated and realize it is OK to ask questions. In order to make sure you are not subjected to unnecessary radiation, please do the following.

1. Listen to your doctor if he or she says a scan may not be necessary.

2. Keep careful track of how many CT exams you have had and make sure your doctor is aware of your history.
3. Ask your physician whether a scan is absolutely necessary or whether another diagnostic test might work instead.
4. If you are healthy, don't have a full body scan to screen for hidden problems

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center in Lakeview or at the office in Alma at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan. Future Lakeview Community Wellness Center Clinics are May 30, June 13, June 27, 2008.

We would be glad to answer questions from readers. You can E-mail me at orthopodsurgeon@hotmail.com or write to me at 315 Warwick Dr. Alma, Michigan, 48801.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush