What you need to know about...

The paranasal sinuses are air-filled spaces in the facial bones of your skull. Radiography of the paranasal sinuses is performed to detect sinusitis (inflammation of the sinuses), as well as to detect fluid in the sinuses or polyps. The examination is ordered when a patient experiences pain and pressure in the face, especially when lowering his or her head. Radiography of the sinuses is an x-ray examination. It may be accompanied by a computed tomography (CT) scan.

**Patient Preparation**

Before your examination, a radiographer will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions you might have. A radiographer, also known as a radiologic technologist, is a skilled medical professional who has received specialized education in the areas of radiation protection, patient care, radiation exposure, radiographic positioning and procedures.

The radiographer will ask you to remove earrings, necklaces, barrettes and hairpins, because metal can interfere with the interpretation of the x-ray image. If you wear dentures or partials, you will be asked to remove them. You also should know that damp hair, tight braids and some types of wigs or hairpieces can be seen on the x-ray image, so it is recommended that you not wear your hair this way for the examination.

**During the Examination**

Before the radiographic exposures are taken, the radiographer will position a heavy, lead-equivalent apron around your back or over your lap. This apron will protect your reproductive organs from unnecessary radiation. You will be asked to move into a variety of positions during the examination. Some images will be taken while you are sitting and others while you are standing. You may be asked to open your mouth, to lift your chin as high as possible or to turn your head from side to side. If you are unable to comply with any instructions, let the radiographer know. His or her job is to give you the best care possible.

For certain types of images, the radiographer may place sponges around your head to help keep it still. It is important not to move during the exposure because any movement will blur the image.

Once the examination is complete, the radiographer will process your x-ray films and determine whether they are technically acceptable and assess whether additional films are required. The films then will be given to a radiologist, a physician who specializes in the diagnostic interpretation of medical images.

**Postexamination Information**

After your radiographs have been reviewed by a radiologist, your personal physician will receive a report of the findings. Your physician then will advise you of the results and discuss what further procedures, if any, are needed.