Can medical diagnostic imaging procedures cause future reproductive problems?



There have been no instances of reproductive problems related to radiation (http://www.radiologyinfo.org) dose from diagnostic exams in future parents. The dose from common diagnostic exams is too small to cause permanent infertility problems or detectable genetic abnormalities in future children.

Sometimes patients who have had a diagnostic imaging exam are advised to wait six to 12 months before becoming pregnant. These types of delays are unrelated to the effects of the imaging exam. The recommendation is usually based on an underlying medical issue that might make delaying pregnancy advisable or necessary. For instance, the imaging exam may have revealed a new medical condition for the patient that could need future medical care. That care may have to be delayed should the patient become pregnant. Or, the physician might want the patient to fully recover from an illness or procedure before becoming pregnant. Although the recommendation for delay is based on a medical reason and is not related to radiation, it can lead to unfortunate misunderstandings about the effects of radiation. Patients should discuss these issues with their healthcare providers.

The real determinant for whether a woman should delay trying to become pregnant is her overall medical condition. If there is reason to expect that the health of the woman would improve during a delay period, or that a delay is preferred to make sure future treatment of a condition is not jeopardized by pregnancy, then a recommendation to delay pregnancy would be appropriate.

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