



**Chandra X-ray
Observatory Center**

Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics
60 Garden St. Cambridge, MA 02138 USA
<http://chandra.harvard.edu>

W51: A giant molecular cloud where stars are forming about 17,000 light years from Earth.
(Credit: X-ray: NASA/CXC/PSU/L.Townsley et al; Infrared: NASA/JPL-Caltech)

Caption: Because of its relative proximity, the giant molecular cloud W51 provides astronomers with an excellent opportunity to study how stars are forming in our Milky Way galaxy. This composite image contains X-ray data from Chandra (blue) and infrared light from Spitzer (orange and yellow-green). Chandra reveals about 600 point-like X-ray sources and diffuse X-ray emission. These X-rays come from young stars, many of which are clumped together in stellar clusters of different sizes throughout W51. Observations like these give astronomers detailed information about how stars form.

Scale: Image is about 20 arcmin (100 light years) across

Chandra X-ray Observatory ACIS Image

CXC operated for NASA by the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory
