

## Dental X-rays. What You Need to Know.

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Dental x-rays are an important tool a dentist uses to determine what is going on in your mouth. Without these pictures, a dentist is limited to just what he can see on the tops of your teeth. It is impossible to see between the teeth or under the gums and bone without dental radiographs. It would be like taking your car to your mechanic and asking him to figure out what is wrong with the engine without opening the hood!

Patients often have questions concerning x-rays. Here are some answers.

### ***How often should I have dental x-rays?***

Dental radiographs are prescribed based on what you need as an individual. There are guidelines available from the ADA, however, we will determine what you require after factoring in your general health history, including any conditions making you more prone to dental problems, your dental history, including frequency of decay and cavities, any periodontal concerns, such as gingivitis and gum and bone disease, and any other issues that might impact your oral health. For example, a person who has had many cavities in the past will need x-rays taken more frequently than a person who has had little decay.

### ***How much radiation is in dental x-rays?***

We use digital sensors to take your radiographs. These use a fraction of the radiation required for most medical x-rays. For example, a chest x-ray uses 0.080 mSV (mSV is a millisievert, which is a unit of measurement for radiation) while four decay detecting radiographs uses only 0.038. Another way of looking at it is four dental x-rays expose a person to less radiation than a person receives simply living in Denver, Colorado. Even though the amount of radiation is small, we will cover you with a lead shield with a lead collar so that only your teeth and mouth area are receiving any x-rays.

### ***Can you use the x-rays from my previous dentist?***

We can use them if they are recent and have good, clear images on them. Let us know if you have had radiographs taken during the past few months and we will help you get them to us.

***Will my insurance cover my x-rays?***

Many dental plans cover x-rays. However your particular plan will specify how many dental x-rays it will consider paying a portion of each year. Some plans limit the number of radiographs and other services such as professional teeth cleaning and gum treatments it will pay because these are the types of procedures many people need to have frequently. Since they are needed often, the insurance plan limits how many they will pay toward.

***Can you take care of my dental needs without x-rays?***

The simple answer to this is “no”. Dental x-rays are essential to correctly diagnosing a person’s dental problems. Even if a patient wants to sign a “waiver” stating that he has refused x-rays according to his personal wishes; any dentist who treats that person knows better. Doctors cannot provide care for patients based on an incomplete diagnosis. From a legal standpoint a patient cannot give consent for a dentist to be negligent. Radiographs are necessary and essential to the care of dental needs.

Call us if you want to know more. We are always happy to help and welcome your questions.

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