

Dental X-Ray FACTSHEET

Q: What are dental x-rays and why are they used?

Dental Radiographs are commonly called x-rays. Because many diseases of the teeth and surrounding tissues cannot be seen when your dentist examines your mouth, an X-ray examination can help in finding and treating dental problems at an early stage. This can save time, money and unnecessary discomfort. Dental x-rays can help your dentist detect problems in your mouth that otherwise would not be seen.

Q: How often dental X-rays should be taken?

The Ontario Dental Association as well as the Canadian and American Dental Associations all agree that how often X-rays should be taken depends on your present oral health, your age, your risk for disease, and any signs and symptoms of oral disease you may be experiencing. For example, children may require X-rays more often than adults. This is because their teeth and jaws are still developing. Also, their teeth are more likely to be affected by tooth decay than those of adults.

Q: Are dental x-rays safe?

Dental x-rays require very low levels of radiation exposure, which makes the risk of potentially harmful effects very small. To further increase the safety of dental x-rays, the Canadian Dental Association (CDA) recommends that the dentists follow the ALARA principle (As Low As Reasonable Achievable) when taking dental x-rays to keep the amount of patient's dental exposure as low as possible. For example, in compliance with ALARA principle the CDA encourages the use of protective aprons and thyroid collars on all patients. To learn more about these recommendations please refer to [CDA's position statement](#) on dental x-rays. If you are not sure why certain x-rays are being taken, talk to your dentist.

More recently, CDA re-emphasized its position statement on dental x-rays in response to several news agencies reporting on a study that suggested an association between the frequency of dental x-rays with meningioma; a commonly diagnosed brain tumor. You can read this response [here](#).

Q: What should I do if I am pregnant?

If you are pregnant, tell your dentist at the beginning of your appointment. Since you may need to have X-rays taken as part of your treatment plan for a dental disease, your dentist may decide to adjust or delay parts/all of your treatment plan. Dental X-rays do not need to be delayed if you are trying to become pregnant or are breastfeeding.

More information:

http://www.myubsonline.com/display_article.php?id=1086152 (ODA Journal Online- June2012)

<http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/x/x-rays.aspx> (American Dental Association 2012)

http://www.cda-adc.ca/files/position_statements/xradiation.pdf (CDA 2012)

<http://www.ada.org/news/6979.aspx> (ADA response to the study 2012)