



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL  
ASSOCIATION

## Dental X-rays

# What lies beneath the surface

Dental X-rays are often necessary when assessing your oral health as they provide a picture of areas the dentist cannot see. Like the rest of our body, there is a lot going on in our mouth. While your teeth and gums may look healthy, getting a dental X-ray can help your dentist identify hidden problem areas before they develop further.

Early tooth decay does not tend to show many physical signs or symptoms. By taking an X-ray your dentist will be able to see whether you have any decay, infections in and around tooth roots, or any bone loss around the teeth. This is important, as these often unseen issues can cause significant health problems if left untreated. A simple and painless X-ray can save your time, your health and your back pocket.

X-rays can be taken on children and adults. X-rays may be taken inside or outside of the mouth. The type of X-ray your dentist takes will depend on what type of conditions you are being assessed for.

### What can dental X-Rays detect?

- Areas of decay that may not be visible in the mouth, especially small areas of decay between teeth.
- Problems with existing fillings or other dental restorations such as root canals, crowns and bridges.
- Presence and severity of gum disease.
- Assist in the planning and preparation of tooth implants, braces, dentures, root canals, extractions or other dental procedures.
- Abscesses or other sorts of infections.
- Conditions associated with tooth development, such as issues with spacing of the teeth, timing of the eruption of teeth, extra or missing teeth, malformed teeth, displaced and malpositioned teeth or impacted teeth.
- Other developmental issues, such as cysts and some types of tumors.
- Traumatic injuries such as tooth and bone fractures or the presence of foreign objects.
- Determining a child's age in situations where it is not otherwise possible.
- Proximity of teeth to important structures such as nerves and sinuses.
- Check the development of wisdom teeth and identify if there is a need to have the wisdom teeth removed.

### How often should I have an X-ray taken?

How often X-rays are taken is different for everyone.

To determine whether X-rays are needed your dentist will review your history and examine your mouth, looking at your present oral health, your age, risk of disease and any signs and symptoms of oral disease.

### Transferring X-rays

If you have had any X-rays taken by a previous dentist, your new dentist may ask for copies of them. You can ask your dentist to forward your X-rays.

### Are X-rays dangerous?

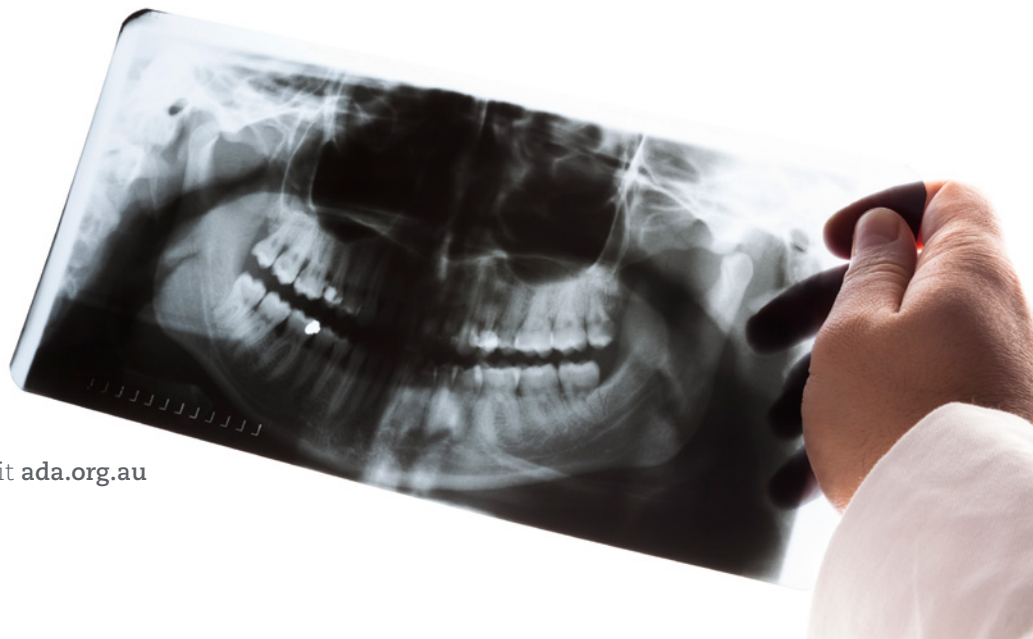
Dental X-rays involve an extremely low amount of radiation. A simple routine X-ray is about the same amount of radiation exposure from a short aeroplane flight (1-2 hrs). Your dentist will carefully consider the need for the X-rays to be taken and the risk of undetected disease if X-rays are not taken.

It is important to let your dentist know if you are pregnant. While X-rays are kept to a minimum during pregnancy, they can be safely taken during pregnancy and may be essential to manage any significant dental disease, infections or trauma.

### Why does the dentist leave the room during an X-ray?

It is understandable that you could be a little concerned if your dentist leaves the room while your X-ray is taken. Don't worry. Remember your dentist is treating a number of patients and it is likely they are taking multiple X-rays every day by leaving the room they limit their exposure to the radiation.

*If you are concerned about getting an X-ray be sure to speak with your dentist.*



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