



Dental X-Rays

Dental x-rays are valuable diagnostic tools that enable your dentist to search for hidden dental diseases such as cavities, gum and bone disease, abscesses, cysts and tumors. X-rays are also used to view the progress of eruption of permanent teeth in children, for orthodontic and implant treatment planning, and for many other dental procedures. Additionally, most insurance companies require radiographic evidence of the need for treatment.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. How often should I have dental x-rays taken?

The American Dental Association has guidelines for how often dental x-rays should be taken. The recommendations for each individual depend on their current dental and medical history as well as the condition of their mouth. Those with increased risk for dental problems may need x-rays as often as every six to twelve months, while others with no recent dental issues may require them less often. At West Wind Dental, we believe that taking dental x-rays are a crucial part of a complete examination. Without them, cavities, infiltration under fillings or crowns, bone loss chronic infections and other abnormalities of the teeth or jaw can go undetected. In fact, x-rays are a vital preventative tool to ensure that small problems don't progress into more extensive (and expensive) ones! It is our recommendation that our patients have their Bitewing x-rays once per year and a Panoramic every 5 years. Other types of x-rays may need to be taken based on treatment needs and insurance requirements (for claim submissions or Pre-determinations).

2. What are the types of dental x-rays I may have taken?

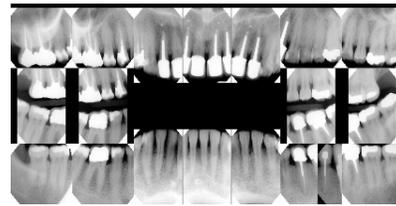
- **Bitewings (BWX):** A set of 4 x-rays that show the teeth above the gum line and the bone between the teeth. They allow your dentist to see bone loss and cavities between teeth.



- **Periapical (PA):** A single x-ray of a specific area including the tooth root and surrounding bone. These images help your dentist detect any unusual changes in the root and surrounding bone structures. This type of x-ray is often needed when submitting claims to insurance.



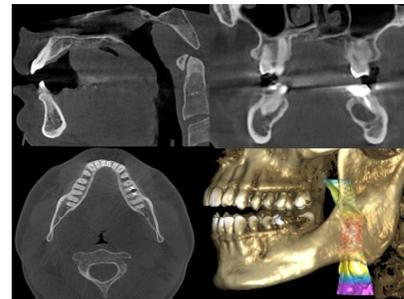
•**Full Mouth Series (FMX):** A combination of bitewing and periapical x-rays consisting of up to 20 films. This complete set of detailed x-rays helps your dentist to diagnose cavities, abscesses, periodontal disease, impacted teeth and other disease processes.



•**Panoramic (PANO):** A dental x-ray that captures the entire mouth in a single image, including the teeth, upper and lower jaws, surrounding structures and tissues. This large image can show impacted teeth, cysts, tumors or other hidden structures, however, may not be helpful for early cavity detection. This type of x-ray is often required by insurance when doing any orthodontic treatment, implants, or devices such as bite splints.



•**Cone Beam Computed Tomography (CBCT):** One of the newest imaging technologies which captures three dimensional pictures of soft tissue and bone. Your dentist may recommend a CBCT for various applications including dental implant planning, evaluation of the jaws and face, cleft palate assessment, endodontic (root canal) diagnosis or diagnosis of dental trauma.



3. How much radiation am I being exposed to with Dental X-rays?

The amount of radiation from dental x-rays is negligible. Four Bitewing x-rays have been estimated to be the amount of radiation received from a 2 hour airplane flight. Radiation exposure is typically measured in units called millirem (mrem). Each year, the average person receives about 620 mrem of radiation from all natural and man-made sources combined. The amount of radiation you get from a single digital Bitewing x-ray is 0.1 mrem.

Compare this to:

- One coast to coast plane ride, round trip: 5 mrem
- Sunlight & other cosmic radiation: 35 mrem
- Food and water for 1 year: 40 mrem
- Breathing normally for 1 year (from radon in air): 228 mrem
- 1 full body CT scan: 1000 mrem

4. Are there ways to limit radiation from my Dental X-rays?

- Digital x-rays significantly reduce the level of radiation, by as much as 70-80%, utilizing sensors that replace traditional photographic x-ray film.
- Your dentist uses the "As Low As Diagnostically Achievable" (ALADA) Method to customize x-ray frequency based on your risk factors to minimize your exposure.

Tell your dentist if you may be pregnant, or you have been told to limit x-ray exposure.

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