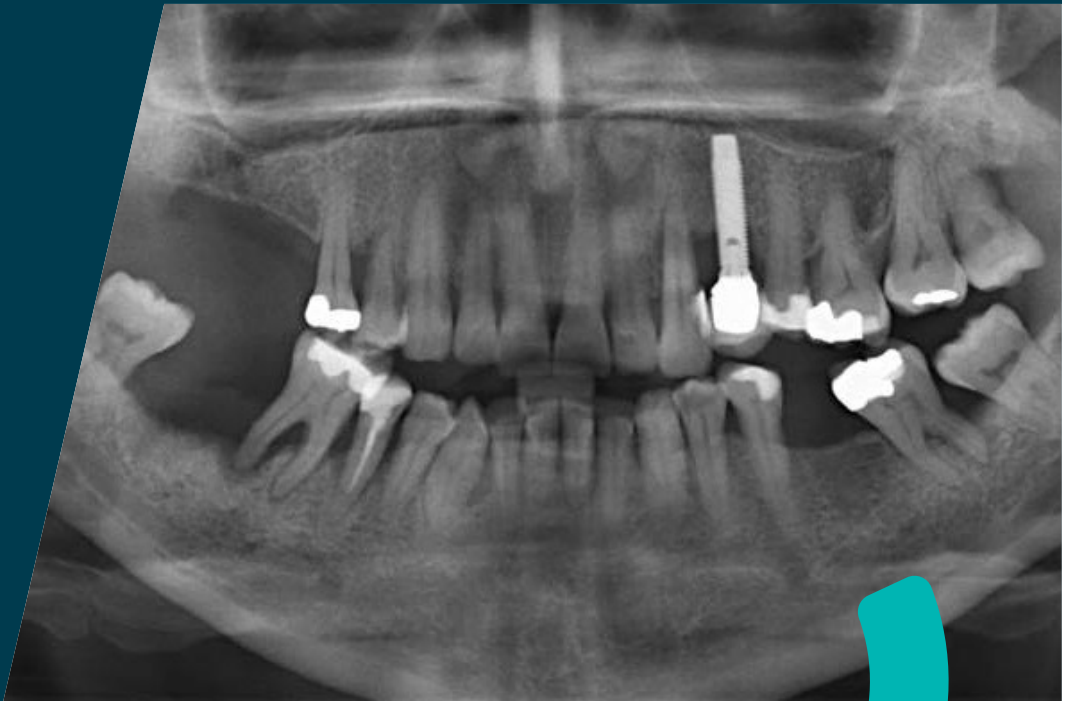


# Dental X-rays



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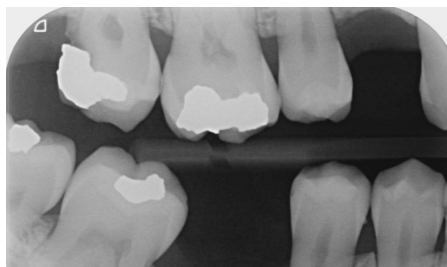


## What are x-rays?

Radiographs are commonly known as x-rays. X-rays are used in many areas of medicine and dentistry to help diagnosis and plan treatment.

X-rays are a form of radiation that travels through the body to create an image of all the different tissues they pass through.

You may be concerned about the level of radiation from a dental x-ray. Dental x-rays are as much as 20 times lower than a return flight to Spain.



A routine dental x-ray

## Why do I need an x-ray?

In dentistry, x-rays can help to diagnose and provide information on the following (but not exclusively):

- Decay
- Gum disease

- Unerupted teeth
- Quality/outcome of previous dental treatment
- Planning new dental treatment

## What happens when taking an x-ray?

Before any x-rays are taken, we will make sure that we confirm your identity with a short series of questions. We may also ask you which tooth you think needs to be x-rayed as a safety measure.

Most dental x-rays are taken with you seated with your head supported in a dental chair. It's important to say if the neck support does not feel comfortable as you need to stay very still throughout the procedure. To take x-rays inside the mouth, a plastic film holder is used to keep the x-ray film still and line up the x-ray equipment. The dental professional taking the x-ray will leave the room or stand behind a screen when the x-ray is being taken. When you hear the beep finish, your x-ray has ended.

Some x-rays are taken standing up using special x-ray machinery which rotates around your head. It is important to follow instructions and keep still during the x-ray.

Taking one dental x-ray can take about 5 minutes, and multiple x-rays or full mouth pictures may take longer.



Example of an x-ray holder

### What are the advantages of dental x-rays?

- We can 'see through' the tissues of the body
- We can diagnose diseases such as decay, gum disease or dental infections
- We can keep a record of your teeth and any previous treatments

### What are the disadvantages of x-rays?

- Sometimes not all the information we require is captured on one film and therefore repeat x-rays are sometimes necessary.
- Dental x-rays produce a very small dose of radiation. However, this level of radiation is a very low risk for patient safety.

### What are the alternatives to x-rays?

In other areas of medicine alternative diagnostic imaging is available for soft tissues (skin / muscles / organs). However, because teeth are made of hard tissue (enamel, dentine, cementum) x-rays are currently the best way to provide diagnostic imaging of the teeth.

When more detailed, 3-dimensional images of the mouth are required, more complex x-rays called CBCT scans are used. These are used in select cases, and are not often used for routine dental treatment.

## What happens after your x-ray is finished?

Once an x-ray has been taken, you will be given the opportunity to see it and discuss what is found on the image. You will be notified if further x-rays are required to capture more information, or if any dental treatment is needed.

## Types of questions you may want to ask...

1. How often should I have dental x-rays?
2. Should I remove my jewellery/glasses/piercing?

## If I'm pregnant, can I still have an x-ray?

There is no evidence to suggest that pregnant women should avoid x-rays. However, if you are worried, you will always have the option to delay having the x-ray until you are no longer pregnant.

## And finally...

Maintaining good oral hygiene is crucial for healthy teeth and gums, and will help reduce the risk of decay and gum disease. Brush your teeth twice daily for 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste and clean between your teeth with floss or interdental brushes.

Smoking and alcohol increase the risk of oral disease. If you want to quit smoking or reduce your alcohol intake, please talk to the clinician you see for further advice.

It is important to attend dental check-ups regularly, as this will help your dentist to identify any dental disease early.





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