

DENTAL X-RAY CONCERNS? SEVERAL QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

I am pregnant and have a toothache. Will an x-ray hurt my baby?

The most recent studies state that there is no risk to your baby, even if you had a complete set of dental x-rays (14-18) without using a lead apron.

Aren't dental x-rays dangerous?

If there was a problem with dental x-rays many thousands of dentists would see it in the cheeks, gums, and mouths of their patients very often, since millions of dental x-rays are taken each day, worldwide, and patients are often seen regularly. We do not see it in this huge population of people.

I recently had a root canal done and they forgot to put a lead apron on me for a couple of x-rays. Was I harmed?

No harm was done if the machine used was made within the past 50 years. Modern dental x-ray machines produce a filtered and focused low-dose beam limited to the area of exposure. There is no measurable radiation anywhere else in the body whether a lead apron is used or not. The lead apron is no longer considered essential but we follow the old guidelines of placing it on all patients to provide peace of mind.

If there is no danger from dental x-rays why does the person taking them leave the room?

Old guidelines, enforced by OSHA, still require x-ray personnel to leave the room, and, the x-ray activation button is usually permanently mounted outside the room. X-ray machines produce a focused low-energy beam that diminishes rapidly within 6 feet. If a technician is in the room and the beam is not focused directly at them there is no exposure to them.

My doctor uses digital x-rays. Why are they better for me and him?

Better for your peace of mind since digital x-ray sensors reduce the already low dose by about 50-90% because they are more sensitive than film. The benefit for your dentist is less worried patients, a better diagnostic tool, and a faster resulting picture that can be enlarged and enhanced. Better for both, since problems can be detected quicker and easier, resulting in less complex treatment and lower cost. Better for everyone because no chemicals are used that must be disposed of. Better to have a large picture on a high-definition screen, than a small negative held up to a light. There are many more benefits to contemporary digital x-rays.

Is there radiation in a room where x-rays were just taken? Do they go through walls into other rooms?

The dental x-rays are only released during the milliseconds a picture is taken and are only effective a few inches from the end of the tube. The dose diminishes rapidly within 6 feet, and if any went through a wall it would not likely be detectable with any device and not harm anyone.

Why can't I refuse dental x-rays?

It is a challenge for dentists when a person declines x-rays, as it is like putting a blindfold over their eyes; we can't do our healthcare job, and often must refuse to see the patient for any treatment, even a cleaning, which is a health treatment. We cannot allow people to neglect

themselves under our supervision even if they sign a waiver, mainly due to frivolous lawsuits (people that sign waivers and sue anyway).

Most dental disease occurs where we cannot see, and x-rays can about 70% of the time. If a person declines x-rays because of fear of them, or the cost, when a problem is discovered later in advanced stages more x-rays are needed and the costs of treatment rises. Dental x-rays are a very important diagnostic tool.