



X - Ray Use

How often should a child have dental X-ray films?

Since every child is unique, the need for dental X-ray films varies from child to child. Films are taken only after reviewing your child's medical and dental histories and performing a clinical examination, and only when they are likely to yield information that a visual examination cannot.

In general, children need X-rays more often than adults. Their mouths grow and change rapidly. They are more susceptible than adults to tooth decay. For children with a high risk of tooth decay, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends X-ray examinations every six months to detect cavities developing between the teeth. Children with a low risk of tooth decay require X-rays less frequently.

Why should X-ray films be taken if my child has never had a cavity?

X-ray films detect much more than cavities. For example, X-rays may be needed to survey erupting teeth, diagnose bone diseases, evaluate the results of an injury, or plan orthodontic treatment. X-rays allow dentists to diagnose and treat conditions that cannot be detected during a clinical examination. If dental problems are found and treated early, dental care is more comfortable and affordable.

Will X-ray films be taken routinely?

No. X-ray films are recommended only when necessary to evaluate and monitor your child's oral health. The frequency of X-ray films is determined by your child's individual needs. If your child's previous dentist obtained X-ray films, request copies be sent to your new pediatric dentist to help reduce radiation exposure.

How safe are dental X-rays?

Pediatric dentists are particularly careful to minimize the exposure of child patients to radiation. With contemporary safeguards, the amount of radiation received in a dental X-ray examination is extremely small. In fact, dental X-rays represent a far smaller risk than undetected and untreated dental problems.

What safeguards are used to protect my child from X-ray exposure?

Lead body aprons and shields help protect your child. Today's equipment filters out unnecessary X-rays and restricts the X-ray beam to the area of interest. High-speed film, digital X-rays, and proper shielding assure that your child receives a minimal amount of radiation exposure.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)

Founded in 1947, the AAPD is a not-for-profit membership association representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. The AAPD's 7,800 members are primary oral health care providers who offer comprehensive specialty treatment for millions of infants, children, adolescents, and individuals with Special health care needs. The AAPD also represents general dentists who treat a significant number of children in their practices. As advocates for children's oral health, the AAPD develops and promotes evidence-based policies and guidelines, fosters research, contributes to scholarly work concerning pediatric oral health, and educates health care providers, policymakers, and the public on ways to improve children's oral health. For further information, please visit the AAPD Web site at www.aapd.org.

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