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# Dental X-Rays: A Necessary Tool



*Have you ever wondered whether dental x-rays are really necessary?*

Actually, dental x-rays are a very important part of a preventive dental care program because they help your dentist detect oral health problems that can't be seen with the naked eye.

Cavities in between the teeth, infections, cysts, and jaw tumors can only be detected using x-rays. Without these images, many forms of hidden disease may go undetected and result in unnecessary tooth loss.

As the old saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Studies show that for every \$1 spent on preventive dental care, **\$8 to \$50 dollars are saved** in the long run.<sup>1</sup> For example, dental x-rays can expose the early stages of tooth decay. And the sooner tooth decay is detected, the easier and less expensive it is to treat.

## How many x-rays, and how often?

- The number and frequency of x-ray films should be individually determined based on the patient's age, dental history, symptoms and risk for dental disease.
- New patients may need a series of x-ray films to view the hidden areas of the mouth.
- If you've been seeing the same dentist for a long time, you may only require a few films periodically. Your dentist will make this determination after considering your individual needs.



## Have no fear.

Some people fear unnecessary radiation exposure. Studies show that the benefits of dental x-rays far outweigh the risks.<sup>2</sup> Every day we are exposed to sources of radiation, including outer space, minerals in the soil, and standard home appliances (like televisions).

A complete series of x-ray films (approximately 21) is equivalent to 16 days of exposure to naturally occurring sources of radiation in the environment.

Of course, if you are pregnant, may be pregnant, or attempting to become pregnant, you should always consult your dentist or physician before having any tests including dental x-rays. Talk to your dentist to determine your specific dental x-ray needs.

*For more information, visit us on the web at [www.cigna.com](http://www.cigna.com)*

<sup>1</sup>[www.adha.org](http://www.adha.org) / press releases  
<sup>2</sup>[www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org), November 2004