

X-Ray Use and Safety

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

A: Since every child is unique, the need for dental X-ray films varies from child to child. Films are taken only after a complete review of your child's health, and only when they are likely to yield information that a visual exam cannot.

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

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

A: 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 health conditions that cannot be detected during a clinical examination. If dental problems are found and treated early, dental care is more comfortable and affordable.

Q: Will X-ray films be taken routinely?

A: No. X-ray films are recommended only when necessary to protect your child's dental health. The frequency of X-ray films is determined by your child's individual needs.

Q: How safe are dental X-rays?

A: 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. The risk is negligible. In fact, dental X-rays represent a far smaller risk than an undetected and untreated dental problem.

Q: How will my child be protected from X-ray exposure?

A: Lead body aprons and shields will 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 and proper shielding assure that your child receives a minimal amount of radiation exposure.