

Did you know?



Dental radiographs reveal what eyes can't see

SADA
THE SOUTH AFRICAN
DENTAL ASSOCIATION

When you think of a dental check-up, you probably picture a cleaning, a mirror, and maybe a little polish. But one of the most powerful tools your dentist uses to protect your oral health isn't something you can see in the mirror at all: the dental X-ray (radiograph).

Seeing Beneath the Surface

Dental radiographs allow your dentist to look beyond what's visible to the naked eye. They reveal what's happening below the gums, inside your teeth, and even within the bones that support them.

These detailed images help identify problems before they become painful or more complex to treat.

Radiographs can detect:

- Cavities hidden between teeth
- Bone loss caused by gum disease
- Infections at the root of a tooth
- Cysts, abscesses, or other abnormalities
- The position of developing or impacted teeth

In many cases, early detection through radiographs can prevent the need for more invasive or costly dental treatments later.

Safe, Simple, and Quick

Modern dental radiographs are incredibly safe. With advances in digital technology, radiation exposure is minimal - often less than what you would experience during a short airplane flight or from natural background radiation in daily life.

Digital radiographs also offer other advantages:

- Immediate results that your dentist can review on-screen
- Enhanced image clarity for more accurate diagnosis
- Environmentally friendly, as they eliminate the need for chemical film processing

Your dental team takes every precaution to ensure your safety, including the use of protective aprons and collars where necessary.

Why Regular Radiographs Matter

Even if your teeth look and feel healthy, some dental problems can develop silently.

For example, decay can form between teeth or beneath existing fillings, and gum disease can damage bone long before you notice any discomfort.

Routine dental Radiographs, typically taken once a year, or as recommended by your dentist, help track changes in your mouth over time and ensure that any issues are caught early.

Different Types of Dental Radiographs

Dentists use several types of radiographs, depending on your needs:

- Bitewing Radiographs – Show details of upper and lower teeth in one area: great for detecting cavities between teeth.
- Periapical Radiographs – Focus on the entire tooth, from crown to root.
- Panoramic Radiographs – Provide a full view of your entire mouth, jaw, and sinus area.
- Occlusal or Cone Beam 3D Radiographs – Offer detailed views for specific diagnostic or surgical planning needs.

Your dentist will recommend the right type of X-ray based on your age, dental history, and current oral health.

Prevention Is Better Than Cure

Dental radiographs are a cornerstone of preventive care. By helping your dentist detect issues early, they save you from potential discomfort, complex procedures, and higher treatment costs.

To find a SADA-registered dentist near you, [click here](#)

Information supplied by The South African Dental Association

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