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X-RAY and OPG

Patient Information

An x-ray is a non-invasive procedure and the most frequently used form of medical imaging. An x-ray of the teeth is known as an OPG (orthopantomogram), a CBCT (a 3d x-ray), a Cephalometric x-ray (for the head) and/ or a small periapical (PA). A small dose of ionising radiation produces pictures of the inside of the jaw/ mouth, and head

Is there any preparation required?

Most x-rays require no special preparation. If you are having an OPG, you will be asked to remove your jewellery, hair clips and dentures.

Please note:

- You must let the clinician know if there is any chance you may be pregnant, although this would not normally pose an extra risk
- You must also let your clinician know if you have recently undergone a recent x-ray procedure in the same area

What will happen during the x-ray?

The radiographer will position you on the x-ray to best expose the area of the mouth/ head being imaged. Sometimes chin devices will be used to help you maintain the proper position. A lead apron may be placed strategically to protect you or parts of you from unnecessary radiation. You must hold very still and may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds while the image is taken to reduce the possibility of blurring. The radiographer will step behind a partition or outside the room when the x-ray is taken. You may be repositioned for another view from a different angle and the process repeated.



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For an OPG, you will be asked to place your chin on a support and bite down on a plastic spatula. You will need to hold your head still while the x-ray machine circles your head in a flat ear-to-ear arc. This produces a panoramic x-ray in which each tooth can be seen individually.

How long will it take?

An x-ray exam usually takes a few seconds. An OPG exam only takes a few minutes.

Are there any risks?

There is always a slight risk from exposure to radiation, even at a very low dose; however, the value of an accurate diagnosis outweighs the minimal risk.

Are there any side or after-effects?

The x-ray itself is a painless procedure. You may resume normal activities immediately following the procedure.

What happens when the x-ray is over?

Your images are electronically stored and your clinician will analyse the images obtained, and, if available will also make comparison with previous images. Your clinician will discuss the results with you. We will maintain digital records of your examination in our system for future access if required. Images are generally stored for a minimum of 11 years or to age 26, whichever is longer.