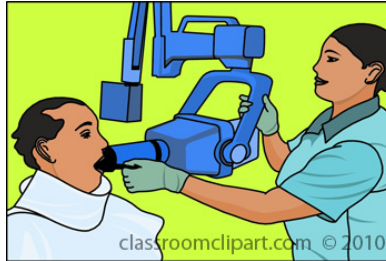


All About Kids Dentistry

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X-RAY USE AND YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY



Since every child is unique, the need for dental x-ray films varies from child to child. However, in general, children need x-rays more often than adults. Children's mouths grow and change more rapidly and their teeth are often more susceptible to tooth decay than adults. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends x-ray examinations every 6 months for children with a high risk of tooth decay and every 12 months for children with a low risk of tooth decay.

Ideally, an initial "pediatric full mouth survey" should be taken at the first hygiene visit. A "pediatric full mouth survey" consists of four films. Two bite-wing x-rays (side films) and two anterior x-rays (front films). This survey detects much more than cavities. It also examines erupting and exfoliating teeth, the surrounding bone, and ligaments to diagnose for systemic or bone diseases and can evaluate for injury.



Panoramic X-ray Examination

When a child's permanent incisors (front teeth) and first permanent molars begin erupting, they are now in a mixed dentition stage and are ready for a panoramic x-ray examination. A panoramic film allows the pediatric dentist to completely examine the patient's upper and lower jaws from ear to ear. Not only is the pediatric dentist ruling out bone disease or other pathology, but the panoramic is used to examine the number and position of developing permanent dentition. Many common problems such as hereditary missing teeth, extra teeth, rotated or impacted teeth can also be detected.

Panoramics are recommended at the mixed dentition stage (7 years old), pre-orthodontic stage (10 years old), post-orthodontic stage (14 years old), and for evaluating wisdom teeth (17 years old).

Safety

Pediatric dentists are particularly careful to minimize the exposure of children to radiation. Lead body 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. Digital x-rays are available for some patients; digital radiography reduces exposure by up to 80%. In fact, dental x-rays represent a far smaller risk than an undetected and untreated dental problem.