

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

A Note on Digital X-Rays & Your Safety

Good to Know · Cisco Dental — Dental Fitness

Dental Fitness depends on catching problems early — and much of what threatens teeth (decay between teeth, infection at a root, bone loss from gum disease) is invisible to the naked eye until it is advanced. Digital X-rays let us see it early, with a remarkably small amount of radiation. Here is exactly how small, and how we keep it that way.

How small the exposure really is

- A single digital intraoral X-ray (like a bitewing) delivers roughly 1 to 8 microsieverts of radiation.
- That means a few bitewings together are usually LESS than the natural background radiation your body already receives in a single ordinary day.
- Every one of us is exposed to natural background radiation every day — from the sun, the ground, the air, and even the food we eat. Dental X-rays add only a tiny fraction on top of that.

Why digital is so much lower

- Digital sensors are far more sensitive than the old X-ray film, so they need much less radiation to create an image — the American Dental Association notes that digital radiography reduces exposure compared with conventional film.
- The image appears on our screen instantly, with no chemicals, and we can enlarge and enhance it to diagnose more accurately — often meaning fewer retakes.

How we keep it 'as low as reasonably achievable'

- We follow the ADA/FDA principle of ALARA — As Low As Reasonably Achievable.
- We take X-rays only when they will actually benefit your diagnosis or care, not on a fixed schedule.
- We use fast digital sensors, precise aiming and collimation, and protective shielding (a lead apron and thyroid collar) every time.

The bigger picture

- The health risk of NOT imaging — missing a cavity, an abscess, or bone loss until it becomes painful or costly — is far greater than the very small radiation of a digital X-ray.
- If you are or may be pregnant, tell us. Dental X-rays use a very low, tightly-aimed dose with shielding, and we will take only what is necessary.
- Questions about your imaging are always welcome — Dr. Donald is glad to walk you through why each image is taken and what it shows.