

## Community Dental Service

### Your dental x-ray and you



# Why do you need to take x-rays of my mouth?

Dental x-rays are taken to investigate possible problems with your teeth. They help the dentist to plan your treatment.

X-rays are a form of radiation called 'ionising radiation'. They give information the dentist cannot see by simply examining your mouth.

In most cases they allow the dentist to see:

- Decay
- The shape of your tooth roots
- The position of your tooth root in relation to nerves or the sinus
- The development of adult teeth
- An abscess
- Gum disease.

Your dentist will only take an x-ray if it needs to be taken and will explain why.

## Is the x-ray equipment safe?

Our x-ray equipment is well maintained and checked regularly by qualified staff. This ensures the amount of radiation we use is kept as low as possible to get the pictures we need.

We will tell you if there are any technical problems during the x-ray.

## What are the risks?

We are all exposed to natural background radiation every day of our lives. This comes from:

- Our environment
- The air we breathe
- The food we eat
- Even from outer space (cosmic rays).

Each dental x-ray gives us a very small additional amount of radiation on top of natural background radiation. This is why we will not take another x-ray if one has already been taken at your dental practice.

Our overriding concern is to ensure the benefits from providing the correct treatment, outweigh the very low risk involved with the x-ray itself.

## **What about pregnancy and breastfeeding?**

If you are pregnant, please tell your dentist so you can discuss the risks and benefits.

You may prefer to delay an x-ray, and your dentist can help you make this decision.

X-rays do not affect milk production or breastfeeding.

## **Putting x-rays into perspective**

Dental x-rays are classified as very low risk.

Two dental x-rays expose you to a similar amount of radiation as taking a three-hour flight.

X-rays of teeth involve a risk of less than one in a million. This is classified as a 'negligible risk category'.

**For impartial and confidential advice or information on the services provided by Bridgewater or to receive this leaflet in an alternative format call our Patient Services team on 0800 587 0562.**