



Tooth Talk

by Linda Kreutzer



Dental X-Rays

X-rays are a very necessary and important part of the dental examination. Your dentist determines how many radiographs (X-rays) are needed. Modern dental X-ray equipment is designed for safety. Minimal amounts of radiation are emitted thanks to special filters and the use of ultra-fast film.

What do X-rays show the dentist? Here are the most common uses of dental X-rays:

1. **Tooth decay.** It's best to discover decay early, before it begins to hurt. X-rays show decay not visible to the naked eye.
2. **Toothache.** X-rays help the dentist understand why a tooth (or gum) hurts. A dentist can recognize an infected (abscessed) tooth in an X-ray.
3. **Gum Disease.** It's amazing that gum disease doesn't hurt. Most people do not realize that they have periodontitis (pyorrhea). X-rays tell the dentist if you have it or not.
4. **Eruption Process.** This dental term means the process of losing baby teeth as they are replaced by permanent teeth. Your dentist needs to check your child's teeth to see if they are coming in correctly.
5. **Cancer Detection.** X-rays show the dentist if any cysts or bone abnormalities exist that may (or may not) be cancerous.
6. **Wisdom Teeth.** Where are you? X-rays show the dentist if wisdom teeth are there, as they usually are hidden well below the gums. Look for wisdom teeth at age 15 to 21.

X-rays were discovered in 1895 and revolutionized both medical and dental care forever. Physicians and dentists could finally "see" into the body with a wonderful new kind of vision. The benefits resulting from the intelligent use of X-rays far outweigh any possible negative effects.



Dental staff and students from OHSU conduct a successful sealant clinic in April. Those involved include students (l to r) Nicole Thompson, Sara Wilcox, and Becky Rooney; dental staff members Jessica Parr, Stefanie Miller, Linda Kreutzer, and Dr. Grayson Pierson; and (front) Kyle Wallace, Carolina Vera-Simmons, and David Edwards, who got their teeth checked and sealed. Dental staff not pictured include Noani Loveall and Sharmaine Scott.

Stress Effects

How Your Body Reacts to Stress

Stress is the response of your body to all demands made upon it. Understanding these demands and their effects can help you learn to recognize your own "stress response" as well as ways to counteract distress to lead a healthier life.

Basic Stress Response

Your body responds to all stress, both positive and negative, by trying to get back to normal. Depending on the stressor (whatever causes the stress response), hormones, like adrenaline, may surge. Your heartbeat and blood pressure will probably increase. Your blood sugar rises. These physical responses helped prehistoric humans survive by helping them run away faster or fight harder. By the time they were done, their bodies had discharged the tension of the moment and their stress response was followed by relaxation.

Physical Effects

Today, we experience stressors that are very different from those early survival ones. Yet positive stressors such as getting married, or negative stressors such as family conflicts, still cause the same physiological fight or flight response. If a stressful situation goes on for too long without any relief, you might experience

diseases and disorders, such as colds, ulcers, asthma, heart attack, or stroke. You may feel tired, irritable, depressed, or anxious. You may have trouble with sleeping, eating (either too much or too little), drinking, and smoking.

Mind-Body Connection

Your mind and body are connected. When your mind is healthy, your body can resist illness better. When your body is healthy, your feelings are more positive. During stressful times, take care of both for maximum health and satisfaction.

Minimize the Effects

There are many ways to keep all the negative effects of different stressors to a minimum, including:

- ◆ Take time for yourself to relax each day.
- ◆ Exercise regularly, after getting your doctor's okay.
- ◆ Learn to "let go" of things that are outside of your control. Learn to adapt to changes.
- ◆ Learn to take action when you can make a difference.
- ◆ Avoid excessive alcohol, caffeine, fats, and sugar. Don't smoke.
- ◆ Give your time to something or someone you believe in.
- ◆ Go away for the weekend.