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The Importance of Dental X-rays in Dogs

How are dental x-rays taken in dogs?

Dental x-rays in dogs are similar to those taken in humans. An x-ray machine using small amounts of radiation, is used to “see” the inside of your dog’s teeth and those areas below the gum line that are hidden from view.

Unlike humans, dogs need to be under general anesthesia for dental x-rays.

Why is it important for my dog to have his teeth x-rayed?

Dogs cannot simply tell us when their teeth are diseased, and some dogs never show that they’re in pain. In many cases, x-rays are the only way for a veterinarian to know your dog has a dental problem that can be treated, relieving discomfort.

Cleaning a dog’s teeth without x-rays often results in missed opportunities to improve the quality of life and health of your dog.



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How often should my dog’s teeth be x-rayed?

Dogs need an oral examination under anesthesia whenever there are missing, discolored or fractured teeth, swollen and inflamed gums, oral growths and bad breath. Even without any of these signs, dogs need to have their mouths x-rayed at least once every year. Remember, one human year is the same as 5–7 dog years and people routinely have dental x-rays at least every other year.



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Must my dog be anesthetized for x-rays?

Yes, dogs have 42 teeth that will be x-rayed. They need to be still during the oral assessment, treatment and prevention procedures. Without anesthesia, the x-ray sensor would not be accurately placed. Thanks to the patient assessment, anesthesia is tailored specifically for your dog and closely monitored during procedures – it's considered to be very safe.

Should I be concerned about excessive radiation?

No. Veterinarians use only a small amount of radiation to take dental x-rays. There are no reports of adverse radiation effects in dogs from this very small amount of exposure.



This client information sheet is based on material written by: Jan Bellows, DVM, Dipl. AVDC, ABVP

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