

X-rays in Dentistry



The object of this book is to provide the dentist with a set of standardized procedures that will help him to produce radiographs of uniformly high quality. Accordingly, the main body of the book, which consists of the second and third sections, is devoted to these procedures. The first section of the book gives the information about X-rays and X-ray equipment that is essential for anyone making dental radiographs; the reader's attention is particularly drawn to the recommendations on safety procedure (page 5).

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Contents

	Page		Page
Introduction	3	Mandibular pre-molar region	19
X-rays	3	Mandibular molar region	20
Dental X-ray equipment	3	The interproximal examination	21
Operation of dental X-ray machines	4	Purpose	21
Safety procedure	5	Head position	21
		Positioning the 'Bite-Wing' film packet	21
		Central-ray projection	21
		Pre-molar—molar region	22
		The occlusal examination	23
Intra-oral radiography	6	Purpose	23
General considerations	6	The intra-oral cassette	23
Films	6	Head positions	23
Preliminary inspection	7	Positioning the occlusal film packet or cassette	24
Positioning the film packet	7	Central-ray projection	24
Positioning the patient's head	8	Maxillary region	25
Angulation of the X-ray tube	8	Maxillary canine—molar region	26
Immobilization	8	Location of maxillary teeth	27
Exposure factors	8	Entire lower arch	28
The periapical examination	9	Mandibular molar region	29
Purpose	9		
Film requirements	9	Extra-oral radiography	30
Positioning the periapical film packet	9	General considerations	30
Head positions	10	Films	30
Central-ray projection : vertical angle	10	Preparation of film for exposure	31
Central-ray projection : horizontal angle	12	Loading exposure holder or cassette	31
Exposure factors	14	Oblique jaw view—for molar region	32
Maxillary incisor region	15	Oblique jaw view—for pre-molar region	33
Maxillary pre-molar region	16		
Maxillary molar region	17		
Mandibular incisor region	18		

	Page		Page
True lateral face view	34	Development	45
Mandible (postero-anterior)	35	Rinse	45
Temporo-mandibular articulation	36	Fixing	46
Panoramic radiography	37	Washing	46
		Drying	46
Processing	38		
The darkroom	38		
Equipment	40	Other information	47
Safelamps	40	Mounting intra-oral radiographs	47
Processing tanks	41	Filing radiographs	47
Processing hangers	42	Typical faulty radiographs	47
Thermometer	42	Weak image	47
Tank immersion heater	42	Dark image	48
Timer	42	Blurred image	48
Illuminator	42	Herringbone pattern	48
Processing chemicals	43	Partial image	49
Developer	43	Fog	49
Developer replenisher	43	Black line	50
Fixer	43	Crimp mark	50
Processing preliminaries	43	Static marks	50
Cleanliness	44	Chemical splashes	50
Preparation of solutions	44	Dark streaks	51
Temperature control	44	Double exposure	51
Preparation of film for processing	45	Black specks	51
Processing procedure	45	Emulsion stripping	51

Introduction

X-rays

X-rays are produced when fast-moving electrons collide with matter. The following of their properties are of significance to the dental radiographer:

- 1) They can penetrate matter to an extent dependent on its density and thickness.
- 2) They travel in straight lines.
- 3) They can produce a developable image on film.
- 4) They can produce changes, both somatic and genetic, in living tissues.
- 5) When they impinge on matter, some of the rays are scattered in random directions.
- 6) They are not detectable by the human senses.

The first three of these properties are useful in radiography; the last three necessitate great caution in the use of X-rays.

Dental X-ray equipment

The dental X-ray tube (see Figure 1) is an evacuated glass envelope containing a cathode (the source of the electrons), and an anode (the target or focus at which they are directed). The electrons are emitted from a heated filament within the cathode, and are accelerated from the cathode to the anode by a very high voltage applied between the two. From the target area of the anode, X-rays are emitted in all directions.

The tube is surrounded by a heavy metal housing that absorbs all the X-rays except for a narrow beam, which is allowed to escape through a window or portal. The beam is further limited, to the minimum area necessary for the work being done, by a diaphragm. This is a heavy-metal disc with a circular hole, which can be fitted in front of the tube window. The window is also covered with an aluminium filter, which absorbs the least-penetrating X-rays; these would otherwise be absorbed or scattered by the patient's skin.

The plastics cone fitted in front of the tube is merely a positioning device and has no focusing or directional action on the X-ray beam. The point of the cone indicates the middle of the X-ray beam, normally termed the central ray.