

Co-Diagnosis

A complete examination

We want you to understand what is included in a thorough dental examination because we believe it is vital for you to be an active participant in your oral care. That way, we can work together to maintain and improve your oral health.

It is important to regularly monitor the health of your mouth because dental problems can grow quickly and lead to worsening infections, tooth loss, and an unattractive appearance. Regular examinations help us keep your mouth healthy and your smile beautiful. When we examine your mouth, we usually look for signs of tooth decay, periodontal disease, and any problems with your bite.

Tooth decay

Tooth decay is caused by acids that are produced by certain kinds of bacteria in the mouth. These acids dissolve tooth structure and cause cavities in the teeth.

Some cavities are easy to see, but for hard-to-find cavities, we may use a dental explorer. A dental explorer sticks slightly when it contacts decayed surfaces on the tops and sides of your teeth.

We also use x-rays to look for decay inside and between teeth. Cavities show up on x-rays as dark spots.



Bite problems affect the TMJ



Bone loss

Periodontal disease

Periodontal disease is an infection of the teeth and gums that causes the jawbone to recede and the gums to pull away from the tooth, creating pockets in the gums. Since you may have no pain or other symptoms with periodontal disease, we use visual examination, a periodontal probe, and x-rays to look for it.

During your examination, we look for red and swollen gums. We use a periodontal probe to measure the depth of the gums from the bottom of the pocket where it is attached to the tooth, to the top of the gums.

A probe reading of more than 3 millimeters is a sign of periodontal disease, and the deeper the pockets, the greater the spread of the disease. Sometimes gums bleed when we probe them; bleeding is also a sign of infection. Healthy gums do not bleed.

X-rays also show us a lot about periodontal disease. In a healthy mouth, the bone comes up high around the necks of the teeth, and it is even throughout the mouth. In advanced periodontal disease, the bone level is much lower and often uneven.

Bite problems

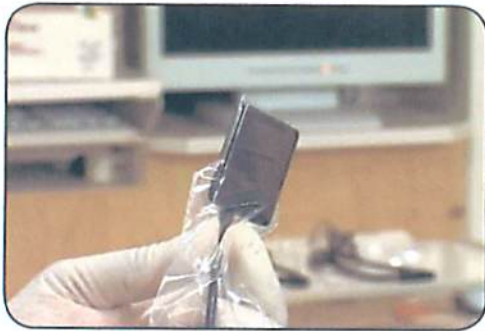
During your checkup, we inspect your bite. When you chew, a healthy bite allows all of your teeth to hit simultaneously, your chewing muscles to contract evenly, and your jaw joint to be seated into its proper position.

However, a bad bite or misaligned teeth can trap plaque and bacteria, leading to periodontal disease and tooth decay. Bite problems can cause tooth grinding and clenching, tooth sensitivity, and the loss of tooth structure near the gumline. They can also contribute to difficulties with your jaw joint, the TMJ.

Digital Full Series X-rays

A full series of x-rays is the first step in a thorough dental examination because it gives us a full view of your mouth.

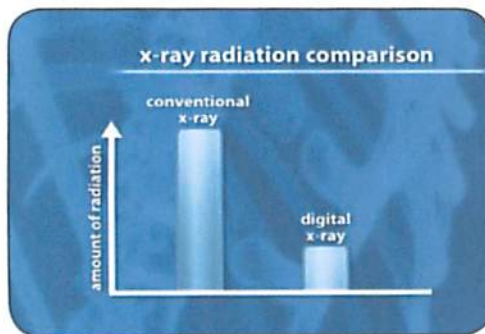
A full series is important because the x-rays give us vital information that we cannot get from any other source.



Digital x-ray sensor



Digital x-ray showing receding bone



X-ray safety



Digital x-ray

Benefits of a full series of x-rays

We use a full series of x-rays to find a variety of oral conditions throughout your mouth, including:

- ❖ Cavities between the teeth
- ❖ Tartar on the tooth roots
- ❖ Worn-out or broken fillings or crowns
- ❖ Receding bone levels resulting from periodontal disease
- ❖ Abscesses

Procedure for taking a full series of digital x-rays

First, we cover you with a lead apron to protect your body while we take x-rays of your mouth. Then we place the x-ray sensor inside your mouth so that it lines up properly to get x-ray images of your teeth.

We repeat this process by moving the sensor to 18 or 19 specific locations to thoroughly evaluate your entire mouth.

Safety of a full series of digital x-rays

Digital x-ray sensors are quite sensitive, so the amount of radiation exposure is very low. In fact, compared to conventional x-rays, digital x-ray systems can reduce the amount of radiation up to 80 percent.

Panoramic X-rays

Comprehensive x-rays

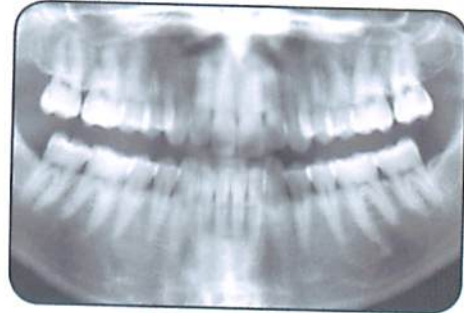
A panoramic x-ray gives us a comprehensive view of your mouth, including your teeth, jawbone, jaw joints, and the sinuses.



Panographic x-ray film



Panographic x-ray machine



Panographic x-ray

Panoramic x-rays are comfortable and safe. They give us vital information that we cannot get from any other source.

Benefits of panographic x-rays

These x-rays give us valuable information about a variety of oral conditions, including:

- ❖ Position of wisdom teeth
- ❖ Receding bone levels resulting from periodontal disease
- ❖ Abscesses
- ❖ Jaw-joint problems
- ❖ Osteoporosis
- ❖ Sinus problems

Procedure for taking panographic x-rays

First, we cover you with a lead apron to protect your body while we take x-rays of your mouth. Depending on the circumstances, we may ask you to remove any jewelry. Then the x-ray film is positioned outside your mouth, and the head of the x-ray machine rotates around you.

Safety of panographic x-rays

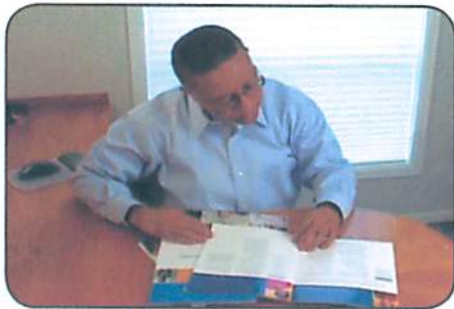
Dental x-rays use high-speed film, so the amount of radiation exposure is very low. Though machines vary, a panographic x-ray adds only about as much radiation as you would get in 10 days from natural sources such as sunlight, minerals in the soil, home appliances, and through the atmosphere from space.

Insurance Information

Dental insurance can be confusing. And to make matters worse, every insurance plan handles things differently.

Dental insurance plans are a contract between you and your insurance provider. It is important that you read your insurance policy or talk to your insurance representative so you can understand how your plan helps pay for dental treatment.

Even though most plans pay only for basic services, we believe that you should be able to choose the most appropriate dental treatment for you and your family.



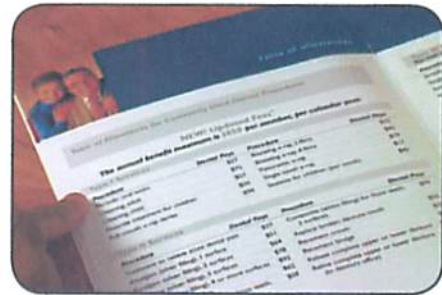
Thoroughly read insurance plans

How insurance plans determine payment

Some plans pay only for dentists who belong to the plan's network, while others let you see the dentist of your choice.

To determine how much they pay for dental treatment, insurance plans use several methods. One is called the Table of Allowances in which the plan lists the treatments it pays for and the amount it pays for each.

Another very common method is called UCR. This stands for "usual, customary, and reasonable." In these cases, the plan calculates a maximum amount allowed for a particular treatment, and then pays 50 to 80 percent of that amount. You pay 20 to 50 percent of the remaining UCR fees, plus the difference between the actual cost of the treatment and the insurance plan's UCR fees.



Determining treatment plan

Payment methods not based on statistics

Many people assume that insurance companies base their fees on statistics. However, while statistics are gathered, insurance companies are not required to use them, and sometimes the statistics are out of date. This means that an insurance plan's UCR fees are usually not representative of what local dentists actually charge.

In fact, different insurance companies' dental plans often have a different set of UCR fees for the same geographical area and for the same group of dentists. And it is not unusual for the same insurance company to pay different UCR fees to the same dental office, depending on which of the company's plans the patient is enrolled in.

The choice is yours

You should know that most insurance plans have not kept up with advances in dentistry. They may cover only minimum quality materials and services and exclude treatments they can label as "discretionary." These often include common treatments such as implants, white fillings, bonding, fluoride treatments, and some periodontal care.

In addition, dental coverage maximums have not kept up with the times. In 1960, a typical annual maximum benefit was \$1,000. These days, many plans still offer that same maximum, but to stay up with inflation, that \$1,000 in 1960 would have had to increase to more than \$6,500 dollars today.

For all these reasons, it is common for our patients to choose a dental treatment that their dental insurance plan does not fully pay for. We urge you to choose the best treatment for you.

Infection Control

Infection control procedures for our staff

We scrub our hands before and after each appointment and always put on a new pair of disposable gloves. We also wear masks and protective eyewear.

We regularly update infection control procedures for all staff members.



Protective face mask



Sanitizing soap



Scrubbing hands



Sterilized instruments and disposable supplies

Infection control procedures

We control infection in a number of ways.

- ❖ All instruments are regularly sterilized, and our handpieces are always sterilized between patients.
- ❖ We use disposable supplies, such as paper bibs, paper cups, cotton rolls, and gauze pads, to avoid potential infection.
- ❖ Water lines are cleaned regularly according to standards published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ❖ We use protective barriers on exposed surfaces, like the handles on light fixtures and other equipment. All other surfaces are disinfected according to government standards.
- ❖ We dispose of biodental waste and sharp instruments in safe containers. These containers are provided through a biomedical disposal company.

Taking infection control seriously

In our office, we take pride in adhering to the highest possible infection control standards. We follow these standards because your health and welfare are important to us.

All staff members are vaccinated for hepatitis B. We regularly update infection control procedures for all staff members.

HIPAA

HIPAA regulations

HIPAA stands for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. It is a set of standards created by the U.S. Congress to streamline the flow of information in the healthcare system and to protect your personal health information.

HIPAA regulations apply to most health plans and to any healthcare provider who electronically transmits healthcare information.



Sharing electronic information



Reviewing patient information



Have questions? Please ask us

Your rights under HIPAA

Your rights and the privacy of your healthcare information are important to us. Under HIPAA, you have the rights to:

- ❖ Confidentiality regarding your healthcare information
- ❖ Access your protected healthcare information
- ❖ Copy, amend and restrict access to your protected healthcare information
- ❖ File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services about how your healthcare information has been used
- ❖ An accounting of how your healthcare information has been disclosed

The HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices

As part of our compliance with HIPAA, we provide you with a Notice of Privacy Practices. We ask you to sign a form acknowledging your receipt of the Notice.

Your rights and the privacy of your healthcare information are important to us.

We are always glad to answer any of your questions about our privacy practices or your rights under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

Oral Cancer Exam

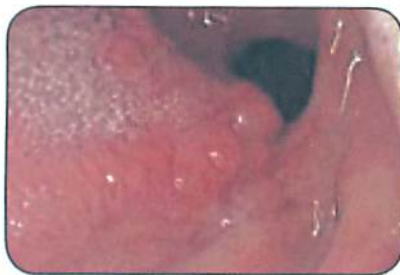
Life saving measures

We perform a thorough oral cancer exam during your checkups because early detection can save your life.

The signs of oral cancer

Oral cancer is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in the mouth and throat. Some of the warning signs are:

- ❖ A red, white, or discolored patch or lump in or around your mouth
- ❖ A sore that bleeds easily or that does not heal within 2 weeks
- ❖ An area that has thickened, raised, or become hardened
- ❖ A rough patch of tissue
- ❖ Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- ❖ A chronic sore throat or hoarseness



Oral cancer



Eat fruits and vegetables



Oral cancer exam

Oral cancer exam

During the exam, we feel for lumps or abnormal tissue changes on your neck and inside your mouth.

We thoroughly examine the soft tissues in your mouth, especially the most frequent oral cancer sites:

- ❖ your tongue
- ❖ the floor of your mouth
- ❖ your soft palate
- ❖ your lips
- ❖ your gums.

We may also do additional testing or use specialized equipment to identify any suspicious areas, particularly if you're at higher risk, such as adults over 40, anyone who uses tobacco, especially those who also drink alcohol excessively, or people who have had oral contact with the human papilloma virus.

Lifestyle changes

Some lifestyle changes can minimize your chances of developing oral cancer changes including—

- ❖ Do not smoke or use smokeless tobacco.
- ❖ Avoid excessive use of alcohol.
- ❖ Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables each day.

With regular exams and a healthy lifestyle, you can better maintain your oral and overall health.