

# X-RAY/OPG

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### What is an x-ray?

An x-ray is a non-invasive procedure and the most frequently used form of medical imaging. A small dose of ionising radiation produces pictures of the inside of the body such as the heart, lungs, spine, joints and bones. An x-ray of the teeth is known as an OPG (orthopantomogram), and is performed on a specialised machine.

### Is there any preparation required?

- Any previous studies and reports should be brought with you.
- You must let the radiographer know if there is any chance you may be pregnant.

Most x-rays require no special preparation. You may be asked to remove some of your clothes and jewellery and to wear a gown during the exam.

If you are having an OPG, you will be asked to remove your jewellery, hair clips and dentures.

### What will happen during the x-ray?

The radiographer will position you on the x-ray table or against a wall stand to best expose the area of the body being imaged. Sometimes pillows or other devices will be used to help you maintain the proper position. A lead apron may be placed strategically to protect from radiation.

You must hold very still and may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds while the image is taken to reduce the possibility of blurring. The radiographer will step behind a partition in the room when the x-ray is taken.

You may be repositioned for another view from a different angle and the process repeated. An image may also be taken of an unaffected limb for comparison purposes.

For an OPG, you will be asked to place your chin on a support and bite down on a plastic spatula. You will need to hold your head still while the x-ray machine circles your head in a flat ear-to-ear arc. This produces a panoramic x-ray in which each tooth can be seen individually.

### How long will it take?

An x-ray exam usually takes 5 to 10 minutes per area of the body. An OPG exam only takes a few minutes.

### Are there any risks?

There is always a slight risk from exposure to radiation, however the value of an accurate diagnosis outweighs the minimal risk. To put it in perspective, you would get more exposure to radiation on a flight from Sydney to Perth than you will during a single x-ray.

### Are there any side or after effects?

You may find the x-ray room or the examining table quite cool, but the radiographer can supply you with a blanket if you are in discomfort. The x-ray itself is a painless procedure.

You may resume normal activities immediately following the procedure.

### When will I get the results?

A radiologist will analyse the images, and your films and signed report will usually be ready within 40 – 60 minutes to take to your referring physician who will discuss the results with you. We will maintain digital records of your exam in our archive system to access it in future if required.