



Information for Consumers - Orthopantomogram (OPG)

This article tells you about an orthopantomogram (OPG), including the benefits and the risks and what happens before, during and after an OPG scan.

What is an OPG?

X-rays use radiation to take pictures of bones and other parts inside the body. An OPG is a panoramic X-ray of the upper and lower jaws, including the teeth. The OPG unit is specifically designed to rotate around the patient's head during the scan. An OPG will take approximately 20 seconds.

An OPG can be used to look for

- Fractures
- Dislocated jaw
- Infection
- Dentition (teeth)

It can also be used for surgical planning.

Benefits of an OPG

- Painless, fast and easy
- No radiation is left in your body after the OPG is finished

Risks of an OPG

Your doctor, dentist or dental specialist knows the risks of having an OPG and will consider the risks before recommending you have this type of X-ray.

Possible risks are

- An extremely small chance of injury to a developing fetus
- An extremely small chance you could develop cancer in the long term from the radiation. However, if you need the examination, the potential benefits will outweigh this small risk

Preparation

Bring your referral letter or request form and all OPG X-rays taken within the last 2 years with you. Leave the X-rays with the medical imaging staff as the doctor may need to look at them. The staff member will tell you when these are ready to be picked up.

Leave all jewellery and valuables at home.

Just before the OPG

There is no special preparation for an OPG.

You may be asked to remove any metal objects.



Important to tell your doctor before the OPG

If you are or may be pregnant.

What happens during an OPG?

Medical imaging staff will ask you to sit on a chair or stand for the OPG. It is important that you tell the staff if you have difficulty sitting or standing unassisted. The radiographer may place a protective shield over the parts of your body not being X-rayed, or you may be asked to wear a protective apron.

When you are ready, the radiographer will go behind a screen to start the OPG machine. They will ask you to be still during the OPG. When your OPG is finished you will be asked to wait while the radiographer checks the pictures. The procedure usually takes about 5 minutes including time taken to get ready.

Consent

A written consent is generally not required for an OPG.

You have the right to refuse an examination and may do so if you wish.

When will I get the results?

The amount of time it takes for you to get your results will differ depending on where you get your scans done. The medical imaging doctor will look at the images and issue a report. The images may be on films on a CD or on a computer. Ask whether you should wait to take the images and report with you, or whether they will be sent to your doctor or dentist. You will need to make an appointment to discuss the images and report with your doctor or dentist.

After the OPG

You will be able to go soon after the OPG is finished and can continue with normal activities.

Costs

For an Australian patient in a public hospital in Western Australia

- Public patient: no cost to you unless advised otherwise
- Private patient: portion of the costs can be claimed through Medicare and your health insurance provider

For a patient in a private hospital or private imaging site in Western Australia or a patient outside Western Australia

- Ask your doctor or the staff where you are having your test done what the cost will be

Further information

For more detailed information please access information on X-rays from Inside Radiology at:
www.insideradiology.com.au



This is a resource produced especially for consumers by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists: www.ranzcr.edu.au

A guide to gathering information that you may need for making informed decisions is published by the Consumers Health Forum of Australia at: <https://CHF.org.au>

Or access the Diagnostic Imaging Pathways website at:
www.imagingpathways.health.wa.gov.au/index.php/consumer-info

If you have questions or require any further information please contact your doctor or dentist or speak to the staff where you are going to have your procedure.

Consumer participation

This information has been reviewed by a health consumer representative.

Feedback

All feedback, comments and suggestions regarding information for consumers at Diagnostic Imaging Pathways are welcome. Please direct them to the following email address: dipfeedback@health.wa.gov.au

Disclaimer

This article is intended as general information only. The Department of Health cannot accept any legal liability arising from its use. The information is kept as up-to-date and accurate as possible, but please be warned that it is always subject to change.

Copyright

© Copyright 2017, Department of Health Western Australia. All Rights Reserved. This article and its content has been prepared by The Department of Health, Western Australia and is protected by copyright.

Date reviewed: July 2017

Date of next review: July 2019