



# Digital Radiography: Dont Miss Out!

By Shelly Rice, RDH

I'm always perplexed by some of hygiene friends who say they don't have digital radiography yet because either the office isn't ready or that their doctors feel it's too expensive. As a hygienist who has seen the light that digital brings to a practice, I see it as my personal mission to help convert these offices. They just don't know what they're missing!

When I ask a hygienist what "not ready" means to her and to her office, I hear things like, "We're not looking forward to the 'big' change."... "We don't have computers in the operatories yet."...and "We don't think our patients will take to it." They must notice the dumbfounded look on my face because they inevitably ask me why I want to know.

This is when I set about on my mission to dispel these misconceptions. First, I tell anyone who will listen that converting to digital from film is easy! If you can take an X-ray, which you already know how to do, and click a key on the computer, which most can and the rest can learn, you can take a digital X-ray. After watching a 10-minute instructional video, our office team was able to take digital X-rays and perform some of the basic functions, like enlarging and enhancing images. After our training session, conducted by a certified instructor who is actually a practicing hygienist, we were able to do a whole lot more.

The biggest logistic change created great time savings. We have instant images now—I mean instant! We no longer have to wait for film to come out of the processor—or not, if it gets eaten. We no longer have to mount X-rays. I don't miss it. And will you miss film developing and processor cleaning? Only if you are from another planet!

Now, let's talk about those offices who have yet to place computers in the operatories. Why should this keep you from enjoying digital X-ray? With the portability of a system such as ours, you can literally take a laptop from op to op. You can start with one or two and build from there, maybe one shared with hygiene and one just for the doctors. It's a good way to get started on computerization, to make the decisions about where to place monitors and related equipment.



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The last "myth" I want to debunk is that patients won't care for digital. Nothing could be further from the truth! There's not a day that goes by that a patient doesn't comment positively about our digital system, whether it's because it's more comfortable than film, faster than film, easier to see than film, or because it takes less radiation than film. And as we expand our use of the system, such as using e-mail to transmit images to other dentists and to our patients, they continue to be amazed at what digital radiography can provide.

Digital X-ray has added so much to our practice. Not only are we able to stop spending money on film, chemicals, mounts, and disposal—we continue to see a significant increase in treatment acceptance. When patients can clearly see a problem, they want you to treat them. They are anxious for it. Does film do this for you now?

I would urge all my film-based colleagues to join the ranks of the dental professionals who are enjoying the benefits of digital radiography. Don't miss out on the clinical and financial advantages. Don't miss out on adding some punch to your practice. Just don't miss out!

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