

High-tech Treatment

Technological advances in dentistry have come a long way. As a result, dentists can serve patients more efficiently, effectively, and comfortably. During your next visit, you might notice that your dentist has added some of the newer technologies to his or her office.

Air abrasion

Air abrasion is a procedure used to remove small areas of decay or to prepare a tooth for the placement of restorations or sealants. This procedure uses an air compression device to deliver tiny particles of aluminum oxide onto the surface of a tooth structure, thus removing decay. With air abrasion, discomfort is minimized and anesthesia may not be needed. Children and adults who are fearful of needles or the noise or vibration of a regular dental hand piece may prefer this option if it is available; however, air abrasion cannot be used as an alternative for every procedure.

Intraoral cameras

The intraoral camera is a wandlike device that projects a magnified picture of a patient's mouth onto a screen. The image allows both the dentist and patient to see fractured teeth, receding gums, and broken restorations. After these pictures are taken, dentists are better able to diagnose and recommend treatment for their patients. The pictures also can provide documentation for insurance companies.

Digital radiography

Similar to traditional X-ray systems, digital radiography allows dentists to detect



decay and bone loss, and it provides visual assistance during root canals. To take a digital X-ray, the dentist places a sensor next to the patient's tooth. Then an image is taken and uploaded to a computer. The dentist can adjust the contrast and brightness of the image to optimize diagnosis and find even the smallest areas of decay. In addition, the digital X-ray process is a little faster than a traditional X-ray system, thus decreasing the amount of time that the patient is exposed to radiation.

Lasers

Lasers can be a good alternative to the traditional drill, as anesthesia is used less frequently. Lasers can reduce symptoms and healing times associated with traditional therapies. Currently, your dentist may use

lasers for tooth whitening, periodontal (gum) disease therapy, and tooth decay removal. Laser therapy cannot be used as an alternative for every procedure.

What if my dentist does not have some of these technologies?

Dentists investigate new technologies when they are introduced in order to ensure that they are safe and beneficial for patient use. General dentists often read clinical studies to determine the effectiveness of products prior to purchasing new equipment, and they may avoid adding some types of new technology until sufficient evidence exists to support their use. If you have questions about the use of a new technology, talk to your dentist.

Resources

www.knowyourteeth.com

Brought to you by the AGD, this Web site answers important dental health questions, offers the latest information on current treatments, provides tips for first-rate oral hygiene, and it can help visitors find highly qualified general dentists near where they live.

1.877.2X.A.YEAR

AGD's toll-free referral number. Call to locate an AGD member dentist in your area.

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