

## Why we take clinical photographs

The main purpose of taking clinical photographs is to make an accurate record of the clinical findings. The photographs are useful to both the clinician and the patient, and can be used in a number of ways:

- They help the clinician plan treatment (alongside other forms of record-taking, such as measurements).
- They provide a baseline reference point for the patient's at the start of treatment. The clinician can then refer to these initial pictures when monitoring the treatment's progress – for example, volumisation or lifting of tissue, relaxation of facial rhytids or body contouring.
- They can be used as motivational tool for patients during treatment. Pictures demonstrating progress are a great source of encouragement.
- Taking clinical photographs at different stages of treatment help us professionals to communicate with patients more effectively – visual aids are very useful when discussing findings and progress.
- The photographs can be used as a medico-legal record. It is recommended that clinicians keep photographic records of any procedures that could lead to litigation.
- The use of photographs can help communication between the clinician and other health care professionals – for example, if a patient is referred to another specialist for treatment.
- They enhance staff training. Photographs are a great visual aid in educating and training staff in dentistry.
- Clinical photographs are good for practice marketing.

## Consistently good clinical photographs

Consistently good clinical photographs require:

- Use a high-quality camera and flash, keeping up to date with new technology.
- Have regular staff training.
- Conduct routine audits to monitor picture quality.
- Communicate effectively with our patient.
- Use standardisation for comparison at different times; for example, by using the same background in pictures and by having a consistent camera magnification and a consistent distance between the patient and the photographer.

Face frontal



This is a picture of the patient's face looking straight at the camera. The patient should have a neutral expression and have eyes at rest. When taking this picture, we aim to capture the patient's face from the top of the crown to the collar bone. The photograph should be symmetrical.

Face smiling



This is a picture of the patient's face looking straight at the camera. The patient's position is the same as for the face-frontal photograph – the only difference is that the patient will be asked to smile. This photograph will help to record soft tissue and facial aesthetics when the patient is smiling.

Profile picture



For this photograph, the patient will be asked to turn to the left and face forward so that their profile can be captured. The aim for this photograph is to capture the patient's face from the top of their crown to the collar bone. The Frankfort plane should be horizontal to ensure the patient is looking straight ahead.

45-degree angle profile



After having the profile picture taken, the patient is asked to turn their head slightly to the right at a 45-degree angle.

When taking clinical photographs, we need:

- Patient consent.
- A camera.
- The patient.