

DOES YOUR CHILD REALLY NEED **BRACES?**



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About this essential guide

Well done for taking the first step. We have based this guide on the most common concerns and questions that we hear from parents; who, like you, are unsure if their child really needs braces.

Parents often come to us with other related questions and these are also addressed here. For example - what problems can develop at an early age? What happens if I wait until later?

It is my hope that within this guide you will find answers to many of your questions. Reading this guide will empower you to make informed decisions regarding your child's dental health.

We would be happy to discuss your child's unique needs at any time should you have remaining questions or wish to schedule an examination appointment.

At what age can you tell if your child will need braces?

Parents are often eager to find out an age at which we will be able to determine whether or not braces will be required. We understand this concern.

The Orthodontic Association recommends that all kids have a checkup by the age of 7. Did you know that some simple early interventions can sometimes alleviate or reduce the need for braces?

An initial visit at age 7 is the perfect age for a first check-up and will set your child up for the best chance of a healthy, beautiful smile for life.

At age 7, your orthodontist will be able to screen for certain developing issues before they become bigger problems.

It is most likely that all your child will need is an examination at this stage. There are, however, a small percentage of children (around 5-10%) who will benefit from intervention.

We won't know which group your child is in unless we 'screen' them - that is, see them for that initial examination.

We occasionally consider early-interceptive treatment in a case where a child is experiencing social issues due to the appearance of their teeth.



What problems can occur at an early age?

Parents often believe that they will be able to spot a bite or alignment problem developing. Sometimes this is the case, but generally it will be an experienced specialist that will identify a potential issue and take action to prevent the issue becoming a substantial and more difficult problem.

Below are some of the problems that can lead to abnormal development of the teeth and jaws:

- Habits such as thumb sucking or tongue thrusting
- Tooth loss patterns - too early or too late
- Teeth that are becoming crowded or blocked out
- Upper and lower teeth that aren't meeting properly
- Narrow jaw/s
- Jaws that are out of alignment with each other
- Teeth that are impacted or trapped under the gum
- A bite 'slide' that can cause the face to grow asymmetrically
- Adult teeth heading into the wrong place under the gums, potentially damaging roots of other teeth
- Missing teeth (sometimes can only be picked up with an X-ray)
- Accident-prone teeth



As you can see, problems often begin at an early age. If your child is 'screened' and found to require early intervention, we can provide simple solutions and save a lot of trouble at a later stage.

What percentage benefit from early intervention?

The percentage of 7-year-old children needing orthodontic treatment is actually quite low. We estimate it to be 5-10%.

The only way to know if your child is in the (approx.) 10% or the 90% is to have them screened by an orthodontic specialist.

If your child has not yet seen a specialist, now is the time!

Do you really need a specialist?

An orthodontist is a dental specialist who has had a further 2-3 years of specialist education beyond a dental degree. This training is focused on understanding developing teeth and jaws, which allows them to accurately diagnose orthodontic conditions.

Your general or paediatric dentist, on the other hand, plays an essential role in the *health* of your child's teeth.

Orthodontists have the foresight and experience to detect and identify opportunities for early intervention, so in some cases braces at a later stage can be avoided altogether.



What if your child doesn't need treatment?

Perhaps you had thought your child may have required orthodontics but upon visiting the orthodontist you have found out that treatment is not necessary.

You should work with your orthodontist to monitor your child's teeth and bite. Regular appointments help us to ensure that everything remains on-track in terms of jaw growth and tooth eruption. Periodic checks are recommended to monitor dentofacial growth and development.

Treatment may also be recommended at a later stage in your child's life. This will allow any needed adjustments to be made at your child's unique 'ideal' developmental stage. The only way to pinpoint this time is via regular check-ups.

After an initial consultation, most orthodontists will provide complimentary check-ups.

Continuing regular checkups at your orthodontist is part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.



What should you look for in an orthodontist?

Select an orthodontist who has plenty of experience whilst also remaining up-to-date with the latest improvements in diagnostic and treatment techniques. You will also want to pick an orthodontist and office that your child feels comfortable with.

Choosing an office that takes a preventative approach reduces the likelihood that braces will be needed - and often means any treatment that is required will be faster and easier.

We have attempted to answer many common questions, but the best way to find out your child's needs is to schedule an examination appointment.

Because we don't know if your child needs treatment or not until we see them, we offer a low-cost examination appointment to screen them.

When you are ready, please call our office. A first visit at around 7 gives your child the best possible start to develop and maintain a beautiful, healthy smile for life.





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