



## Dental Problems In Children Linked To Bullying

(NAPSA)—Here's surprising news that can help parents take a bite out of the issue of bullying: Having "ugly" teeth may significantly contribute to the problem, according to a recent study published in the American Journal of Orthodontics & Dentofacial Orthopedics. According to the study, teeth were the No. 1-targeted physical feature to increase a child's chance of being bullied, followed by the child's strength and weight.

Adds Robert E. Varner, DMD, president of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO), orthodontists have long been aware of the relationship between how teeth look and poor self-esteem—no matter the age of the patient. "A person's smile is very important in communication and interpersonal relations," says Dr. Varner. "Our teeth are visible, so when they are poorly aligned, this can be an easy target for teasing or bullying. Parents often confide that their child is being 'teased' about the appearance of his or her teeth."

Dr. Varner offers five suggestions that may help.

1. Let your child know that most kids even into their early teens may still have baby teeth and as he/she gets older and more permanent teeth appear, his/her looks and smile will change. And the looks and smiles of the kids making fun of him/her will change, too.

2. Make an appointment with an orthodontist who is a member of the AAO, which recommends that every child see an orthodontist no later than age 7 in order to check for abnormalities or issues



**One way parents can protect their youngsters from bullying is to provide proper dental care.**

that could benefit from early orthodontic treatment. Most children won't need it, but it's a good idea to make sure your child's jaw and bite are developing normally.

3. At the appointment, ask the orthodontist to explain to your child that orthodontic treatment creates a healthy, beautiful smile. This will reassure the child that he/she won't have that gap or overbite forever.

4. Some orthodontists offer computer imaging that shows how your child may look after orthodontic treatment. Seeing this transformation can be exciting and reassuring, soothing your child's fears about how he/she will look.

5. Find photos of celebrities when they were young. Many who had crooked teeth or gap-toothed smiles grew up to be successful athletes, actors, artists, writers, world leaders and more. It can help send the message that you're not worried about how his/her teeth look and he/she needn't be, either. To locate a nearby orthodontist, visit [www.mylifemysmile.org](http://www.mylifemysmile.org), the official website of the American Association of Orthodontists.