



DENTAL DOINGS

Does My Child Need Orthodontic Treatment?

(NAPSA)—For most people—especially children—having a healthy, attractive smile can do a lot for their self-image, which contributes to their overall outlook and self-esteem.

Orthodontists can play a crucial role in the development of a child's smile; these specialists have two to three years of extra education beyond dental school—giving them particular expertise in diagnosing, preventing and treating dental and facial irregularities.

When to Begin

What parents may not realize is that they don't have to wait for all of a child's permanent teeth to come in before seeing an orthodontist. In fact, it's strongly suggested that children have a simple checkup with an orthodontist at no later than age 7.

"Our goal is to provide each patient with the most appropriate treatment at the most appropriate time. Even with baby teeth present, an orthodontist can detect existing or developing problems. This evaluation is essential to proper jaw relationships and straight teeth," said Robert James Bray, DDS, MS, president of the American Association of Orthodontists.

Regardless of a child's age, parents should consult an orthodontist if they notice the early or late loss of baby teeth; difficulty in chewing or biting; mouth breathing; thumb or finger sucking; crowded, misplaced or blocked-out teeth; jaws that shift or make sounds; biting the cheek or roof of the mouth; teeth that meet abnormally or not at all; and jaws and teeth that are out of proportion to the face.



Getting a child to an orthodontist at no later than age 7 can mean getting a head start on correcting dental issues.

A Variety of Options

From sleek wires and next-to-invisible brackets to removable products such as Invisalign, orthodontists use a variety of tools to create a healthy, beautiful smile. Before they settle on any treatment, however, Dr. Bray urges parents to get the facts from an orthodontist. A product is only as good as the expert who applies it.

"There is tremendous interest in products like Invisalign and ClearCorrect because they look simple and hassle-free," he said. "These aligners can be effective if your child is a candidate for this treatment option and wears the devices as prescribed. But the orthodontist is educated about the full array of options to move teeth and align jaws and can advise you on how to achieve treatment goals."

Learn More

A great smile may be easier to get than you think. To find an orthodontist nearby and put your child's smile in the hands of an expert, ask your dentist for a referral or visit www.braces.org.