

# DENTAL HEALTH

## Expert Answers To Your Questions About Orthodontic Treatment

by Dr. Raymond George

(NAPSA)—Everyone wants a dazzling smile, but with so many products and quick-fix promises on the market, what's the best way to achieve the smile of your dreams? For more than 5 million people, the answer is orthodontic treatment. The goal of treatment is to achieve a healthy, beautiful smile and a lifetime of improved dental health. Here are the answers to some questions about orthodontic care:

**Q: How old is too old for braces?**

A: Healthy teeth can be moved at almost any age. Currently, one in five orthodontic patients is an adult—and many are over age 50. Given technological advances and the affordability of treatment, orthodontic patients can enjoy comfortable and simplified treatment. Adults appreciate today's next-to-invisible treatment options.

**Q: What is the difference between braces and veneers?**

A: Braces are used to align teeth and correct the bite. Veneers do not straighten teeth. They are not a substitute for orthodontic treatment because they cannot correct underlying orthodontic problems. Veneers are not advised to mask the appearance of misaligned teeth because of the potential for dental disease in the long term. But veneers can be placed after orthodontic treatment to correct misshapen or discolored teeth.

Adults considering veneers should first consult an orthodontist. They may be pleasantly surprised to learn that their unattractive teeth are generally healthy, just misaligned.

**Q: How do I know if my child needs braces?**

A: It's not always easy to tell if your child has an orthodontic



**Raymond George, Sr., DMD, orthodontist and president of the American Association of Orthodontists, answers some commonly asked questions about orthodontic care.**

problem, so the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) recommends all children see an orthodontist no later than age 7 for a simple checkup. This exam can identify potential problems and ensure that any future treatment is timed appropriately.

Some signs or habits that may indicate the need for an orthodontic examination are 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 rest of the face.

If parents observe these problems in their child, regardless of age, they should consult an orthodontist. Names of AAO member orthodontists and information on orthodontic care are available on [www.braces.org](http://www.braces.org).