

Kids And Braces: The Straight Facts

(NAPSA)—Currently, more than 4 million children and 1 million adults in North America wear braces. For many patients, especially children and teens, a healthy, beautiful smile goes beyond good health; it indicates confidence. “Not only can orthodontic treatment improve health and overall appearance, patients often experience a tremendous boost to their self-esteem when they can smile and not be embarrassed by the condition of their teeth,” said Dr. Don Joondeph, president of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO).

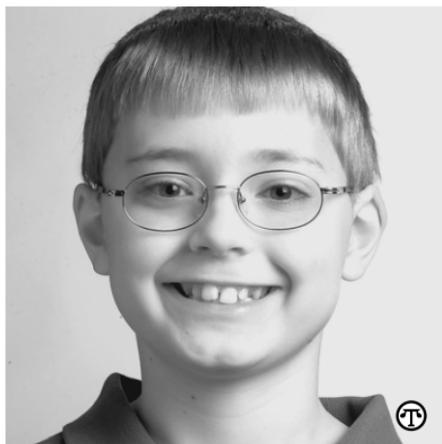
But how do you know if your child needs braces? The AAO provides answers to this and other frequently asked questions:

Does my child need braces?

It's not always easy to tell if your child has an orthodontic problem. However, some signs or habits may indicate the need for an orthodontic examination: early or late loss of baby teeth; difficulty in chewing or biting; mouth breathing; thumb or finger sucking; crowding, 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.

When should my child see an orthodontist?

If any of the problems above are noted by parents, regardless of your child's age, it is advisable to consult an orthodontist. All children should see an orthodontist no later than age 7 for a simple checkup. This quick and painless exam can identify potential problems and ensure that any future treatment is timed appropriately.



Abnormal spacing of teeth is just one of the many signs that your child should be examined by an orthodontist.

My child sees a dentist for regular checkups and cleaning. Why see an orthodontist?

Orthodontists specialize in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of dental and facial irregularities. Orthodontists receive an additional two to three years of specialized education beyond dental school to learn the proper way to align and straighten teeth. Orthodontists team with your child's dentist to ensure that your child achieves optimal oral health.

How quickly will we see results and how much will it cost?

Treatment time averages 24 months. Although orthodontic treatment does not produce same-day results, some children may only require limited treatment. In addition, orthodontic treatment is affordable and is often covered by dental insurance plans.

For more information about orthodontics or for the names of AAO member orthodontists in your area, visit www.braces.org, call (800) STRAIGHT (1-800-787-2444) or ask your dentist for a referral.