

# Health Awareness

## The Straight Facts About Orthodontists

(NAPSA)—If you've been bracing yourself for orthodontic treatment, there's good news: Today's orthodontic treatment is easier on patients and more affordable than ever—plus you'll be in good company.

More than five million men, women and children in the United States and Canada are in the care of orthodontists. While the obvious benefits of orthodontics include straighter teeth and a better smile, doctors say treatments can also help with certain health issues.

If you plan on visiting an orthodontist, the following answers to some frequently asked questions may help you choose one that's right for you:

### What Is An Orthodontist?

Orthodontists are dental specialists trained in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of dental and facial irregularities. Orthodontic specialists generally practice only orthodontics and typically do not perform any general dentistry. To become an orthodontist, a person must complete college requirements, graduate from dental school (average of 4 years), then successfully complete a minimum of two academic years in an accredited orthodontic residency program. All orthodontists are dentists, but only about six per-



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### How Should I Choose An Orthodontist?

It's a good idea to look for an orthodontist who is a member of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO). Only orthodontists are eligible for membership. The nearly 9,200 U.S. and Canadian members have all gone through the necessary education and training to practice orthodontics and be called "orthodontists." The group's orthodontists are uniquely qualified as experts at moving teeth, helping jaws develop properly and working with patients to help make sure teeth stay in their new positions.

### When Should Children First See An Orthodontist?

Doctors recommend that every child get a checkup with an orthodontic specialist no later than age 7. Some orthodontic problems may be easier to correct if detected early rather than waiting until jaw growth has slowed. Early treatment may help a patient avoid more complex care later in life.

### Is It Ever Too Late For A Person To Get Braces?

No. Because healthy teeth can be moved at any age, an orthodontist can improve the smile of practically anyone. In fact, orthodontists regularly treat patients in their 50s, 60s and older.

### What About Costs?

Fees vary, but many orthodontic problems may require only limited treatment. In addition, orthodontists offer a variety of payment plans and many dental insurance plans now include orthodontic benefits.

### How Can I Find An Orthodontist?

Your family dentist can refer you to an orthodontist. You can also find one by visiting the "Orthodontist Locator" service at [www.braces.org](http://www.braces.org). In addition, consumers can call 1-800-STRAIGHT for more information and to receive the free video, "A Smile That's Good for Life."