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## **Do my KIDS need dental braces?**



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One of the common questions I get asked by parents all the time is: “does my kid need dental braces?”. Even at birthday parties, once parents hear that I am a dentist, they pull me aside and ask me to quickly peep into their children’s mouths to ascertain whether the crooked teeth will straighten out on their own.



**Before treatment**



**After treatment**

A modern woman must place matters to do with her and her family’s health uppermost on the list of her priorities.

The whole family must look good and confident. All this may be difficult to achieve if one is not able to trust her/his smile, has bad breath, cavities, loose teeth, bleeding, inflamed gums with food particles collecting in between teeth. This is where a visit to the dentist becomes important. One of the causes of poor dental health is dental malocclusion, which can present as crooked teeth, open bite, deep bite, “jetting out of upper front teeth, crowded/bunched up teeth in the front, narrow tooth arches, “drifted teeth”, space shortage, extra-big teeth etc. Normal or good alignment of teeth not only contributes to optimum oral health but also goes a long way in the overall wellbeing, confidence and a positive personality of an individual.

Parents often wonder if the benefits of the dental braces make them worth the time and expense. When considering dental braces. I want parents remember that dental braces are normally the last resort. It is important to visit your dentist regularly in order to receive preventive dental care. That way many expensive orthodontic procedures can be avoided. For example, by simply preserving baby teeth until their shedding time by way of getting them filled by an ordinary dentist, a parent can save a fortune later in life.

### **Why is orthodontics so important?**

Crooked and crowded teeth are hard to clean and maintain. Such problems can contribute to teeth decay,

gum disease and tooth loss. A bad bite can also cause abnormal wear of tooth surfaces, difficulty in chewing and/or speaking, excess stress on supporting bone and gum tissue, and possible jaw joint problems. There's also the emotional side of an unattractive smile. When you're not confident in the way you look, your self-esteem suffers. Children and adults whose malocclusions are left untreated may go through life feeling self-conscious, hiding their smiles with tight lips or a protective hand. Finally, without treatment, many problems become worse. Orthodontic treatment to correct a problem may prove less costly than the additional dental care required treating the more serious problems that can develop in later years.

However, the advantages of orthodontics do not stop with cosmetics alone. Patients receive important medical benefits as well. By ensuring the teeth and jaws are properly aligned, it is possible to prevent or alleviate potential physical health problems. When the teeth are aligned properly, there is a reduced chance of decay, fewer cases of gum or periodontal disease and a decrease in the risk of injury. Straight teeth are easier to keep clean and thus collect less plaque, a risk factor in periodontal disease. Reducing periodontal disease can also reduce the chances of inflammation that is often associated with an increased chance of stroke and heart disease. In addition, when teeth are straight, they are less likely to be broken in an accident. Thus the correction is helpful in protecting the natural smile and allowing individuals

to keep their teeth through their entire adult life. Braces can be used to help close gaps and spaces in order to reduce the need for bridges or other oral devices later in life.

If the teeth are in need of orthodontic correction but left untreated, the individual may suffer tooth decay, digestive difficulties and periodontal disease. When the teeth are misaligned, surfaces may wear abnormally, the chewing may be inefficient and the gum tissues and bones that support the teeth under stress. By taking steps early in a child's life, the cost of care is often much less than that of treating the serious problems that can develop as the individual ages and experiences increased wear and tear on the teeth.

While the physical benefits alone may be enough for many parents to consider braces for their children, there are also many psychological benefits. Once the teeth are straightened, many teens have greater confidence needed for success in the things they are asked to do. Youth can also have greater self-acceptance, enhanced attractiveness and an increased sense of well-being.

The benefits of orthodontics have long been documented through both scientific studies as well as personal observations. They begin with a great smile. The smile is often the first impression others have of an individual. It is a large part of one's identity as well as how a person is

perceived by peers. Improving the smile is one of the greatest investments one can make.



**Before treatment**

**6 months after start of treatment**

The dental braces (orthodontic treatment) are typically used in a variety of cases with bad tooth alignment. Common problems are those with Orthodontic treatment is a long term treatment procedure, going for several months and for this reason it requires good commitment from child and parent alike. Good oral hygiene (brushing, flossing) and proper eating habits according to instructions from the dentist or Orthodontist, are a must. Treatment typically starts off by taking of specialized x-rays, tooth models, pictures of the face and teeth etc. A contract is often drawn out and appropriate motivational sessions arranged. Braces work by slowly moving and shifting teeth into new and good positions by applying light pressures. Bands, wires and elastics are placed on the teeth to move them in the right direction. This takes place slowly and carefully over an extended period of time, months or years. It is important to continue to wear the braces or appliance for however

long your dentist or orthodontist recommends for successful outcome. If you quit at any point during treatment, the teeth can shift back into their old bad positions.

Orthodontic treatment may be provided by your dentist or an orthodontist, a dentist who specializes in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of dental and facial irregularities. It will depend on the orthodontic experience of your dentist and the severity of your case.

Since abnormal bites usually become noticeable between the ages of 6 and 12, orthodontic treatment often begins between ages 8 and 14. Treatment that begins while a child is growing helps produce optimal results. That doesn't mean that adults can't have braces; healthy teeth can be orthodontically treated at any age. Treatment plans will vary based on your situation, but most people are in treatment from one to three years. This is followed by a period of wearing a retainer that holds teeth in their new positions. Today's braces are more comfortable than ever before. Newer materials apply a constant, gentle force to move teeth and usually require fewer adjustments.

While you have braces it's important to maintain a balanced diet for the health of your teeth. Of course, a healthy diet is always important, but eating too many sugary foods with braces can lead to plaque build-up around your brackets that could permanently stain or

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damage your teeth. Avoiding foods like popcorn, corn on the cob, chewing gum, whole apples, and other sticky foods is also a good idea. Ask your dentist about foods to avoid while you are in treatment. Not all of us are born with beautiful smiles, but with a good oral hygiene routine, and a little help from orthodontics, you can have a beautiful and healthy smile.

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