



CityOrthodontics
& PediatricDentistry

What You Need to Know About Orthodontic Treatment





Some children are born with perfect teeth, requiring zero intervention. But for the less fortunate, orthodontic treatment is often needed. If this is the case, how can you ensure your children get the treatment in the proper time?

Braces today are more comfortable than the ones you might have worn, but they can still be a scary idea for children and teenagers alike. Your children will no doubt experience frustrations, but you want to alleviate as much stress as you can and ensure the process is as smooth as possible.

How exactly can you do that? Finding a registered orthodontist is a big factor in starting this journey. You want to find a specialist you trust and who your kids are comfortable with. After all, this will be the beginning of a long relationship—your children will have regular orthodontist appointments for several months or years.

Orthodontic treatment will make your children happier in the long run when they see their brand new smiles. Here are some ways you can play a proactive role in the process and ensure they get the proper treatment possible in the right time.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR CHILD NEEDS ORTHODONTICS?



It seems like more and more children are getting braces these days. In fact, **about 300,000 Canadian children are currently seeing an orthodontist**, and these numbers have recently increased. But how can you tell if your child really needs them?

Only an orthodontist can say with certainty whether your child requires braces. An orthodontist will use a combination of diagnostic tools, clinical exams, plaster models of teeth, and x-rays to determine whether your child needs treatment and what that treatment will involve.

You can, however, keep an eye out for possible problems and bring them to your doctor's attention.

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Early or late loss of baby teeth
- Difficulty chewing or biting
- Grinding or clenching teeth
- Crowded or misplaced teeth
- Jaws shifting or noises like popping
- Teeth that meet abnormally (or not at all)
- Jaw and teeth that seem out of proportion with the rest of the face

SEE A REGISTERED DENTAL SPECIALIST

An **orthodontist** is a dentist who has undergone two to three years of additional post-graduate training. Some dentists do orthodontics, but aren't specialists, so be sure to do your research when scoping out clinics.

Make sure to see a specialist who's trained to deal with children. While some kids are excited to get braces, beginning any type of orthodontic treatment is a big deal. It can be a stressful time for both you and your child. You'll want to find someone who's experienced in treating children to ensure your child feels safe and comfortable throughout the entire process.

Ask the orthodontist the following questions:

- How long have you been practising?
- What kind of cases do you treat?
- What financing options are available?



TIP:

Most orthodontists have before-and-after photos in their clinics—check these out to get a better sense of their work.

SEE A REGISTERED DENTAL SPECIALIST

Kids need braces for a wide number of reasons. A straight, healthy smile will do wonders to boost your child's self-confidence. But since your dental health is closely linked to your overall health, the benefits of straight teeth extend far beyond gaining a better smile.

Braces help treat many problems that are associated with misaligned teeth and bite patterns, including:

- Overbite: The upper front teeth lie too far forward or stick out over the lower teeth
- Underbite: The lower teeth are too far forward or the upper teeth are too far back
- Crossbite: The upper teeth don't come down slightly over lower teeth when biting together normally
- Open bite: There's space between the front and side teeth when the back teeth bite together.
- Breathing or swallowing problems
- Teeth crowding
- Jaw pain
- Headaches and earaches
- Teeth spacing
- Speech, chewing, or biting problems

GET AN EARLY ASSESSMENT

Booking an orthodontist appointment early on will help improve your children's dental and overall health. Early detection of problems allows for timely treatment. If your children get the right treatment from a young age, they can avoid more extensive treatment down the line.

Children have softer, more malleable bones so their jaws can more easily move or grow in an ideal shape. This means treatment will take less time. Early intervention helps prevent future issues, reduces your children's risk of gum disease and tooth decay, and helps them avoid future surgery in certain cases.

An early assessment may be a benefit to your child and may help them achieve a beautiful smile!

WHEN TO BEGIN ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT?

You've likely already heard that doctors recommend children first see the orthodontist by the age of seven. This doesn't mean that orthodontic treatment will begin right away. In most cases, orthodontic treatment won't be needed so early. The orthodontist

is trained to detect subtle issues in how your children's permanent teeth are coming in, and how their jaws are developing.

The first appointment can go one of three ways:

- You learn your child's teeth and bite are fine
- The orthodontist discovers a potential problem and decides to monitor it
- You discover there's an issue that is best treated by early intervention

Children generally get braces between the ages of eight and 14. By this time, their baby teeth are all gone, and their permanent teeth are in place. Some kids who have undergone early treatment need to get braces again as teenagers to fine-tune the results, but the treatment time will be a lot shorter.

Remember that it's also never too late to get an assessment or to begin orthodontic treatment! In fact, many parents are seeing the amazing results from their kids' orthodontic treatment and get-ting braces for themselves too. Almost 20 percent of people in braces today are adults!



WHEN ARE BRACES REALLY NEEDED?

Think your child is too young to get braces? You're wise to be cautious of agreeing to extensive treatment. But the right orthodontist will have your child's interests in mind and will have specific reasons for suggesting early treatment.

Sometimes early orthodontic treatment will involve pinpointing current and potential problems and identifying when to begin treatment when the mouth is mature. Orthodontists usually take an interceptive approach. This means they'll use different orthodontic appliances rather than braces during the early stages. Plates, for example, are usually worn by young children to fix minor crowding or bite problems, or to close gaps.



WHAT DOES TREATMENT INVOLVE?

After a thorough patient examination and medical history evaluation, the orthodontist will develop a treatment plan for your child. Treatment can involve:



- Palatal expanders
- Braces
- Headgear
- Retainers
- Removable appliances
- Invisalign aligners
- Oral surgery

Braces are the most common type of orthodontic treatment, but depending on your child's bite problems, the orthodontist may suggest a combination of other treatments.

WHAT TREATMENT WORKS?

The type of treatment that will work for your child depends on the problems the orthodontist is trying to fix. Some children benefit from early orthodontic treatment like limited braces or oral appliances. Others don't need early treatment and will benefit from traditional braces to align their teeth and correct bite issues.

For those who need minimal correction, [Invisalign Teen](#) is a great option. Your teens will love that the smooth, plastic aligners are nearly invisible—hardly anyone will know they're wearing them! They can also remove the aligners to eat and clean their teeth. For the best results, teens will need to be diligent in wearing them for 20 to 22 hours a day, leaving just enough time for eating, brushing, and flossing. Keep in mind that this treatment isn't ideal for patients with complex issues like severe bite misalignment.

Talk to your child's orthodontist to find the treatment that will deliver the best results. With the properly timed treatment, your child will:

- Avoid extractions of permanent teeth
- Attain a balanced facial profile
- Gain confidence with a beautiful, straight smile



WILL YOUR CHILD NEED TO WEAR A RETAINER?

After your child gets their braces removed, they might have to wear a retainer to maintain the changes made to their teeth. A retainer is a custom-made device designed to keep teeth in place as your child's teeth will naturally try to shift over time.

There are two types of retainers: **removable and fixed**. Removable retainers are usually worn full time for at least a year after your child's braces are removed. Your child can take them out to eat and brush their teeth. Fixed retainers are worn 24/7 for several years.

Your child will be thrilled when their braces come off but wearing a retainer may be necessary to maintain their beautiful new smile. The orthodontist will recommend how long your child needs to wear a retainer to help your child maintain their beautiful smile.

COMPLETE CARE

The right orthodontist knows how to deal with children and will take the time to give them top-quality, compassionate care. Find an orthodontist who communicates well with your child and takes a comprehensive approach to oral health. An orthodontist's goal shouldn't merely be to straighten teeth. The right orthodontist will also consider the entire face and jaw in their treatment plan. They'll address any muscular imbalances, joint problems, and headaches, and eliminate teeth grinding, swallowing issues, and speech problems.

Choose an orthodontist who uses the latest technologies and has tools specifically designed for your little one's teeth. Advancements in digital x-rays and the types of braces available—including Invisalign and clear braces—make for faster, more comfortable treatment. When visiting clinics, ask about the orthodontic technology they offer.

REMEMBER:

Orthodontic treatment is a big responsibility. To ensure successful treatment, your child will need to follow strict rules like brushing and flossing every morning and night, and in between meals. There are also certain foods they can't eat, including anything too crunchy or sticky. While the orthodontist will explain everything, take the time to support your child and ensure they're following all the steps.

CONSIDER THE OFFICE ATMOSPHERE

Be sure to visit the orthodontist's office with your child before committing to a practice. Are the staff members welcoming? How do they talk to your child? You may be spending up to three years with the orthodontist you choose, so be sure to take your time deciding.

Make sure the clinic is kid-friendly. Is it a relaxing environment? Are there bright colours? Are toys and games set up in the waiting room? Your child will be a lot more comfortable in a child-friendly orthodontist's office, where everything is designed with children's needs in mind.



BEFORE AND AFTER CASES

CROWDING

BEFORE



AFTER



OVERBITE

BEFORE



AFTER



CROWDING

BEFORE



AFTER



SPACING

BEFORE



AFTER





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