

when should children see an orthodontist? (for parents)



While orthodontic treatment can improve smiles at any age, there may be an optimal time for individual patients to begin treatment in order to achieve maximum improvement in a minimum amount of time.

The American Association of Orthodontists recommends that a child's first visit to an orthodontist takes place no later than age seven if an orthodontic problem is detected. Depending on the type of problem, this first visit could take place as early as age four to six.

Sometimes, malocclusions are present behind seemingly acceptable smiles. And while treatment may not be started until years later, early examination allows the orthodontist to detect and evaluate problems and plan appropriate treatment at the optimum time. In some cases, early treatment may be initiated to prevent more serious problems from developing. This early intervention may make treatment at a later age shorter and less complicated.

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WHY YOUR CHILD SHOULD GET AN ORTHODONTIC CHECK-UP NO LATER THAN AGE 7

1: Orthodontists can spot subtle problems with jaw growth and emerging teeth while some baby teeth are still present.

2: While your child's teeth may appear to be straight, there could be a problem that only an orthodontist can detect.

3: The check-up may reveal that your child's bite is fine. Or the orthodontist may identify a developing problem but recommend monitoring the child's growth and development. Then, if indicated, begin treatment at the appropriate time for the child. In other cases, the orthodontist might find a problem that can benefit from early treatment.

4: Early treatment may prevent more serious problems from developing and may make treatment at a later age shorter and less complicated.

5: In some cases, the orthodontist may be able to achieve results that may not be possible once the face and jaws have finished growing. Early treatment may give your orthodontist the chance to:

- Guide jaw growth
- Lower the risk of trauma to protruded front teeth
- Correct harmful oral habits

Through an orthodontic evaluation at an early age, you will be giving your child the best opportunity for a healthier and more beautiful smile. Because patients differ in both physiological development and treatment needs, the orthodontist's goal is to provide each patient with the most appropriate treatment at the most appropriate time.

SOME EARLY WARNING SIGNS THAT MAY INDICATE YOUR CHILD SHOULD SEE AN ORTHODONTIST:

- Crowded or misplaced teeth
- Protrusion (overjet)
- Deep bite (overbite)
- Early or late loss of baby teeth
- Thumb and finger sucking
- Speech difficulty
- Difficulty in chewing or biting
- Grinding or clenching of teeth
- Jaws that shift or make sounds
- Missing teeth
- Signs of enamel wear

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH THEIR ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT:

- Make sure they brush their teeth a minimum of 4 times a day especially after every meal.
- Ensure they take a toothbrush and some toothpaste to school so that they can clean their teeth after lunch.
- Make sure they don't eat sweets or drink fizzy drinks. Encourage healthier, tooth friendly alternatives such as fresh fruit and water.
- If your child is sporty, protect their teeth and braces with a mouth-guard.
- Help keep your child's removable braces safe when they're not wearing them by purchasing a brace case.
- Call the orthodontic clinic straight away for advice on lost or broken braces.
- Once braces are fitted, purchase a brace cleaning kit.

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