

ORTHODONTICS

Straight facts about crooked teeth

Youngsters and adolescents are not the only ones who can undergo orthodontic treatment — adults can benefit, too.



When you think of braces, what comes to mind is a metal-mouthed child or teenager. However, this is no longer the case, with more adults jumping on the bandwagon to get the smile of their dreams.

Orthodontics is a field of dentistry that specialises in correcting irregularities of the teeth. The top reason for seeking orthodontic treatment is the same for an adult as for a child: malocclusion, or a bad bite.

Malocclusion is usually caused by problems with the shape or size of the jaw or teeth. A common cause is having too much or too little room in the jaw. If a person's jaw is small, the teeth may grow crookedly; if there's too much space in the jaw, the teeth may drift out of place. This results in not just poor appearance — it may also adversely affect the patient's speech and mastication process. It also makes him or her more susceptible to dental decay.

Treatment options

Treatment options for children and adults are largely the same.


In some cases, a removable retainer will be all that's necessary. In other cases (especially when there is an extreme overbite or underbite), surgery may be necessary. One or more teeth may need to be removed if overcrowding is the main problem. In most cases, however, braces will be needed to correct the problem. The mechanical process used to move teeth with braces is the same at any age. So the benefits of orthodontic treatments are available to both children and adults who wish to improve their appearance and bite.

Adults vs children

The main differences between treatments in adults and children are that certain corrections in adults may require more than braces alone; the treatments may also take longer because adult bones are no longer growing.

An advantage of starting treatment as a child — even before they have lost all their baby teeth — is that the work needed may be significantly less if the orthodontic treatment is started early.

Types of braces

If braces are indeed the solution for you, the orthodontist will prescribe an appliance specific to your needs. The braces may consist of bands, wires and other fixed or removable corrective appliances. There is a range of models to select from. As an adult with braces, you may need to wear them longer than a child or a teenager would, but they can still produce similar results. 



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