

Braces and Orthodontics

When is it time to visit the orthodontist?

What causes a bad bite? Sometimes it's heredity. Protruding, crowded, or irregularly spaced teeth and jaw problems can run in families. They can be caused by thumb sucking, premature tooth loss, and accidents, too.¹

While treating this condition certainly results in a nicer smile, the results are more than cosmetic. Crooked and crowded teeth make cleaning difficult, and that can lead to tooth decay and loss. A bad bite can cause jaw problems, erode enamel, and make chewing and speaking more difficult.¹



When should your child get treated?

Age 7 is the perfect time for an orthodontic evaluation. At this age, your child has a good mix of adult and baby teeth. It's also around this time that a bad bite makes itself known. If your dentist decides braces are necessary, treatment should begin between ages 8 and 14, while your child is still growing. Making sure your child gets regular dental checkups and cleanings helps dentists to spot potential trouble.² If your child is diagnosed with a bad bite, he or she will get a treatment plan. This can include:

- 1 Braces for one to three years, depending on the condition .
- 2 A retainer to hold the teeth in their new positions.

Today's braces are more comfortable than ever. New materials apply a gentler force and need fewer adjustments.

Dental Appliances

Braces and other devices can be fixed in place or removable. The dentist usually selects the type based on the patient's needs. Brackets attach braces to the teeth.

Braces and brackets can be made of:

- Metal
- Ceramic
- Plastic
- A combination of all three

Braces and elastics come in lots of different colors, even some that glow in the dark. Ask your orthodontist what options are available for your child.

Orthodontics

Most dentists can treat minor orthodontic problems. If they can't, patients will be referred to an orthodontist. These doctors address bad bites through braces, procedures, and appliances that can straighten teeth and correct jaw alignment. (Find out more at www.braces.org.)

Adults in Braces

It's never too late to help adults with a crooked or crowded bite, over- or underbite, misaligned jaw, or jaw-joint disorders. The process of moving teeth is the same; however, treatment of adults takes longer. (Check to be sure your plan covers orthodontic treatment for adults.) Because adult facial bones are no longer growing, other methods may be used to correct the bite with a healthy, happy smile.

Discuss your diagnosis and treatment plan with your dentist. Your dentist will verify coverage.

Special Care with Braces

Good oral hygiene is more important than ever with braces. If you want a healthy smile, consider eating a balanced diet and limiting between-meal snacks. Certain foods can harm braces; these often include:

- Popcorn
- Gum
- Hard candy
- Caramel
- Ice
- Chewy candy

Braces don't interfere with most activities. If you or your child plays certain sports you may need a mouth guard. If you have braces, it may take some time to readjust to playing a brass or woodwind instrument.³

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1 <https://www.healthline.com/health/malocclusion-of-teeth>, accessed May 2018

2 <https://www.sharecare.com/health/dental-oral-health-teeth/when-call-doctor-have-malocclusion>, accessed May 2018

3 <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/b/braces>, 2018 (accessed May 2018)

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