



What is Orthodontic Treatment?

Orthodontic treatment, commonly referred to as the “straightening of teeth”, is the moving of teeth that may be improperly placed into the correct positions intended by nature. There are many causes for misaligned teeth (malocclusion). Malocclusion may be due to the overcrowding of teeth, premature loss of teeth, lip and tongue habits, birth developments and/or accidents. Orthodontic treatment focuses on the straightening of teeth and is not a substitute for general dental care. Regular preventative dental care is very important during orthodontic treatment.

You may need orthodontics if:

- Your teeth are crowded; do not fit together when your mouth is closed, unevenly spaced or protruding
- You breathe through your mouth or if your lips do not come together normally
- Your teeth do not fit together when your mouth is closed
- Your lower teeth bite outside the upper teeth
- You have too much space between teeth

How long will it take to complete treatment?

Treatment time depends on each patient’s specific orthodontic problem. In general, treatment time lasts from 8 months to 30 months. The “average” time frame a person is in braces is approximately 18-24 months. Keeping your appointments, following your doctor's instructions, caring for your braces and practicing good oral hygiene is the best method of completing your treatment on time, or in some cases, earlier than anticipated.

How much will braces cost? Are financing options available? How does my insurance work?

It is impossible to give an exact cost for treatment until we have examined you. We will review the cost and financial options prior to starting any treatment. We can review your insurance policy and help to maximize your benefit and file your claims. We encourage you to call your insurance plan to ask for an explanation of orthodontic benefits.

How often will I have appointments?

Appointments are scheduled according to each patient’s needs. Most patients in braces will be seen every 4 to 5 weeks. If there are specific situations that require more frequent monitoring, we will schedule appointments accordingly. Additionally, wires or brackets may become loose or come off completely which may require additional visits. Proper care is the best way to prevent these unexpected extra visits.

Can I schedule all of my appointments after school?

Unfortunately, we cannot schedule all appointments for students after school hours. However, because most appointments are scheduled 4 to 5 weeks apart, most patients will miss minimal school due to their orthodontic treatments. We reserve every other Thursday at our office as an orthodontic day. Most of your appointments will be scheduled on Thursdays.

Can I drop my child off for an appointment?

Yes. We understand your schedule is busy, and we are happy to help you make the most of your time. On some occasions, we may request to speak with a parent when they return, so we ask that parents check-in before dropping off their child.

Do I need to see my family dentist while in braces?

Absolutely, you should continue to see your general dentist at least every six months for cleanings and dental checkups.

How often should I brush my teeth while in braces?

In a perfect world patients should brush after each meal and before going to bed. We suggest brushing well after breakfast, when coming home from school, and before bed time. Good tooth brushing habits are very important! We will also show you how to floss your teeth with braces, and we may provide a prescription for a special fluoride treatment, if necessary.

What is an emergency appointment? How are those handled?

If your appliances (braces or other) are causing extreme pain or if something breaks, you should call our office. In many cases, we can address these issues over the telephone. If you require an emergency appointment, we will set aside time for you.

Are there any foods I cannot eat while I have braces?

Yes. Once treatment begins, we will explain our complete instructions and provide you with a comprehensive list of foods to avoid. Some of those foods include ice, hard candy, raw vegetables and all sticky foods (i.e. caramel and taffy). No gum chewing. You can avoid most repair appointments by carefully following our instructions!

Will my braces hurt?

Modern bands and brackets are designed to minimize any discomfort. However, your mouth will usually be sore the first few days after you get braces and for a day or two each time they're tightened. This varies from patient to patient. If you experience pain that doesn't diminish, alert your doctor and he will determine the cause of your problem. Also, a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as aspirin or ibuprofen may help if it is taken one hour before your appointment as needed.

Will braces cause sores?

They may at first. A soft piece of wax (provided by your orthodontist) can be used to cover a brace or wire that may be causing the sore. Rinsing the mouth with warm salt water often helps as well.

Do I need to do anything special the first week or so?

Yes, while you're getting used to the braces, eat softer foods. Most importantly, spend more time cleaning your teeth and braces.

Why do some people wear rubber bands?

The rubber bands are used to move teeth forward, backward, and/or up and down. If rubber bands are recommended for you and you don't wear them, it could lengthen your treatment time.

What happens if a bracket comes off?

This is typically not an emergency that needs immediate care. In this instance, clean around the loose bracket(s), or remove it from the wire. The doctor will attach another one. Save any brackets that come off because they are expensive and we can often reattach them.

What do I do if a wire breaks?

First of all, don't panic – broken wires are common. Don't try to bend or cut the wire – there's a good chance you will end up making things worse. If the wire is poking you, cover the end with orthodontic wax or wet cotton. Then be sure to call as soon as possible. A broken wire can delay progress, increasing the amount of time that you have to wear your braces.

What are the consequences of not cleaning braces properly?

Not cleaning your braces properly can lead to tooth decay, gum disease, and other serious health problems, not to mention unattractive tartar, stains, and bad breath. Plus, taking poor care of your braces can increase your treatment time with them. If the situation is bad enough, your doctor may even have to stop treatment, take off the braces and wait until teeth and gums are healthier before putting them back on.

I was told my child would have to wear braces for a year, and it's already been 2 or 3 years.

This situation is not uncommon - it's impossible to predict exactly how fast teeth will move, and for some kids this happens much slower than predicted. The time needed for braces to work depends on growth, the severity of the problem, and how well the patient cooperates, including maintaining good oral hygiene, wearing auxiliaries such as rubber bands as directed, avoiding damaging food, and keeping all of their follow-up appointments.