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Orthodontics: Dental Braces in the 21st Century

Years ago, dental braces were used only for pre-teens and teens having problems with their bite (malocclusion). Today, orthodontic treatments are not only for pre-teens and teens, but for adults as well.



Orthodontic treatment restores function and esthetics for a beautiful smile.

Close to 30% of all orthodontic patients in the United States are adults. Despite this growing trend towards adult orthodontics, it pays to start orthodontic treatment early for maximum effectiveness. The American Dental Association recommends that children receive an orthodontic evaluation by age seven.

The Restorative and Esthetic Nature of Orthodontics

Since malocclusion may interfere with eating and speaking, it is usually considered a restorative issue. Although, because a malocclusion may prevent the development of a beautiful, well-aligned smile or facial jaw lines, it may also be classified as an esthetic issue and categorized as cosmetic dentistry.

No matter what your age, orthodontics can protect your bite (occlusion), maximize your teeth's effectiveness in performing their functions and create a well-aligned smile. Today's orthodontics involves repositioning of the teeth and underlying roots, providing better support for the crown of the tooth. Orthodontic treatment is now associated with the benefits of greater esthetic appeal, increased comfort and reduced treatment time.

Orthodontic treatment can also rejuvenate your facial appearance by reshaping the jaw, neck and lips, especially when combined with maxillofacial surgical procedures. In addition, well-aligned teeth make oral hygiene easier to maintain.

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Orthodontists

Orthodontists are the dentists who focus on the practice of orthodontics. An orthodontist is typically required to complete an additional two to three years of post-dental school education before becoming a certified practitioner of orthodontics.

The Orthodontic Evaluation

If you are a candidate for orthodontics, you will likely be referred by your general dentist to an orthodontist for evaluation of your bite. During your first orthodontic visit, your orthodontist may use several methods to develop an individualized treatment plan, including:

- Oral, facial and functional evaluation (examination).
- Intraoral and facial photographs.
- Panoramic and cephalometric X-rays.
- Impressions for models of the teeth and bite.

An orthodontist reviews your dental records, performs a clinical assessment, takes X-rays of your mouth and head and makes models of the teeth by creating an accurate impression of them. The results of this evaluation are studied in order to formulate the best orthodontic treatment plan.

Typically during the second visit, your orthodontist reviews the treatment plan and estimates the number of months for the active phase of treatment. The standard treatment phase is two years. Following treatment, you may be required to wear a retainer for a period of time.

The duration of orthodontic treatment varies based on your age, the extensiveness of the procedure (some people require more work than others) and how closely you follow your treatment plan. For example, younger patients may respond more quickly to treatment than older patients because the bones supporting young teeth are more pliable than those supporting older teeth. However, adults tend to follow treatment instructions more consistently than pre-teens.

In some cases the treatment time is longer. For example, oral surgery and recovery may be needed before or during orthodontic treatment.

Call us or drop in to make an appointment for a consultation with are orthodontic specialists.