

Children's Health



Four Big Reasons For Little Kids To See An Orthodontist

(NAPSA)—Although parents may assume that they must wait until a child has all of his or her permanent teeth before seeing an orthodontist, the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) says that all children should get a checkup with an orthodontist no later than age 7.

Why Then?

1. By age 7, enough permanent teeth have arrived for orthodontists to evaluate the bite, meaning the way teeth and jaws come together.

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

3. Early diagnosis allows the orthodontist to intervene at the best time for the patient. In some cases, the orthodontist will be able to achieve results that may not be possible once the face and jaws have finished growing.

4. Undesirable growth in jaws cannot "ungrow." Improper tooth contact wears away enamel. Lost tooth enamel doesn't come back.

An early orthodontic evaluation gives your child the best opportunity for a healthy, beautiful smile. Treatment can guide jaw growth, lower the risk of trauma to protruded front teeth, correct harmful habits that affect teeth and supporting bone, and may improve appearance.

Why An Orthodontist?

Orthodontists, explained Nahid Maleki, D.D.S., M.S., president of the American Association of Orthodontists, have more specific training than general or pediatric dentists to identify subtle problems with jaw growth and emerging teeth, even if baby teeth are present.

To become an orthodontist requires graduation from dental school followed by two to three years of specialized education in orthodontics at an accredited orthodontic residency program. Orthodontists are uniquely qualified specialists who diagnose, prevent and treat dental and facial irregularities to correctly align teeth and jaws. All AAO members are orthodontists.



Give your kids something to smile about: Have them see an orthodontist no later than age 7.

It's not necessary to have a referral from your dentist to see an orthodontist.

Problems to Watch for In Growing Children

Meanwhile, there are tooth troubles that parents themselves can be on the lookout for. These include:

- Crossbite—bottom teeth in the back are outside the upper teeth
- Top teeth positioned behind bottom teeth
- Front teeth don't meet when back teeth are touching
- Top teeth that cover the lower teeth completely
- Protrusive upper jaws, upper teeth.

The most common outcome of an age 7 checkup is "let's wait and see" while the face and jaws continue to grow. If treatment proves necessary, periodic monitoring allows the orthodontist to suggest the appropriate treatment at the appropriate time.

Learn More

For further facts and advice, or to find nearby AAO orthodontists, go to www.aaoinfo.org.