

Phase I + II Treatment vs. Comprehensive Orthodontic Treatment

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“Back in my day, you just got braces when all of your permanent teeth were present.” Talk about a classic line from parents of patients, albeit true. Heck, I even fell into that cliché when I was an adolescent. The result was 4 years of straight-up braces (no pun intended). Well, I’m here to tell you that **TIMES HAVE CHANGED!** No more long, uncomfortable, drawn-out experiences if we (orthodontists) can get to you at the right time. *Where is he going with this?* I’d be remiss if I didn’t take a step back and explain myself.

We are entering a unique time in the history of orthodontics where I can comfortably say that many parents of patients had the opportunity to have orthodontic treatment. Whether it was braces when they were young or clear aligner treatment, aka Invisalign as an adult, the prospect was there. Conversely, in the past there were many barriers to treatment which included lack of dental awareness, comparatively less social awareness (as it pertains to social media and its influence), as well as finances. Needless to say, our parents were likely not as lucky when it comes to orthodontic care. If you don’t fall into this category, worry not, because my point will bring it all together. In just the last few decades, materials and techniques have improved drastically, and the way to treat patients most ideally became intercepting potential issues that could be foreseen with our incredible diagnostic tools rather than waiting for all teeth to be present.

With that I present to you Phase I Orthodontic Treatment which often includes palatal expanders to create space for anticipated or existing crowding, limited braces to close up spaces, and appliances to fix unwanted or uncomfortable bites, to name a few. At **Bancroft Dobrin Orthodontics**, our patients that require this type of treatment thrive, and on average only need about 9-12 months of treatment. There are literally tons of case studies published throughout the literature that show how effective starting orthodontic treatment at a young age can be. How young are we talking? Realistically, interceptive therapy or Phase I starts in the 8-10 year old range because there is typically half permanent teeth, half baby teeth at that age. These ages vary though, because dental age does not always correlate to chronological age (and in many cases there are large differences). Orthodontic treatment can effectively resolve poor oral conditions such as crowding, excessive spacing, crossbites, underbites, overbites, habits (like thumb-sucking), and many other issues both effectively and efficiently before things take a turn for the worse. Why wait and risk longer treatments later on? Or worse, extractions of permanent teeth due to crowding that could have easily been resolved with an expander? Or delay resolving uncomfortable bites which are best to fix at a young age during periods of growth that we can capitalize on?

At our family offices, we practice with integrity and will **ALWAYS** give you honest and true opinions on whether it is necessary to start at a younger age (Phase I), or if treatment can wait until the majority of the permanent teeth erupt (Comprehensive Treatment). Not everyone falls into the category of requiring interceptive treatment, and that is where we put you on a recall schedule, closely following the condition of the teeth and jaws until you become ready for comprehensive treatment.

The Phase II component comes into play following Phase I treatment, when it is needed. A successful Phase I treatment would afford the permanent teeth more space to come in or a better chance at safely coming through the gums, and we will continue to follow up throughout growth to see where those teeth erupt. Often times, there is a need for a short Phase II treatment, whether braces or clear aligners, to fix the slight imperfections of the teeth or to help resolve bite issues stemming from extended unfavorable growth patterns. The point is, correcting issues earlier will make treatment much easier for the patient and minimize total treatment time.

All that said, the majority of patients undergo comprehensive treatment which would be one total course of treatment where you are treated to completion. For those who have had treatment in the past, we always ask about their individual experiences, which all vary. But there is always a common theme – it took forever! WELL, THAT’S NO LONGER THE CASE! As stated earlier, the vast improvement of materials and technologies will make treatment more efficient by decreasing total treatment time as well as improving comfort throughout the process. Come visit us and see all of the incredible state-of-the-art options we offer. All ages welcome! At our offices, we offer complimentary consultations, and if no treatment is necessary at that time you will be placed in our complimentary recall system to follow up at a later date to evaluate again. For more information, check us out at www.bdorthodontics.com!

Dr. Keith Dobrin (from *Bancroft Dobrin Orthodontics* and *XtraOrdinary Smiles Orthodontics*) is a recognized ABO Board-Certified orthodontic specialist with a degree in Advanced Education in Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics. His research on braces adhering to teeth has been published, and given his experience and expertise, he has been selected to test various orthodontic products from national and international companies.