

Is My Child Ready for Orthodontic Treatment? **Written by Keith R. Dobrin, DMD, MBA**

When it comes to finding out the appropriate time for an orthodontic evaluation (and potentially the start of treatment) for your child, as parents, we typically take advice from one of two reliable sources in this field: 1. the dentist, and 2. our friends. Not necessarily in that order. “But it seems like they are starting at such a young age these days. When I had braces I was a teenager and it took four years to fix my teeth.” That is EXACTLY what we as orthodontists are trying to avoid - the long, drawn-out, uncomfortable treatments of old that just seemed to continue on forever!

The American Association of Orthodontics recommends an orthodontic evaluation for children at the age of 7. Why so young? The reason is not necessarily to get some type of treatment started but more so to get a baseline of what the dental condition is at this time. Realistically, interceptive therapy or Phase I treatments start 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). This makes it even more important to find out the dental age and thus determine if anything must be done to help the child develop appropriately. Orthodontic treatment can effectively resolve 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?

I have two young children, and my wife and I make it a point to brush their teeth and try to make it as enjoyable of an experience as we can {cue the eye-roll}. Joking aside, we ultimately want them to value this twice daily occurrence and we do our best to make sure they understand the importance of oral health. But there comes a time when it becomes routine in the later years for the child to brush their teeth on their own. I implore you to stay on top of it and monitor things as baby teeth start to loosen up and permanent teeth grow in, making sure that nothing looks out of the ordinary. It never hurts to ask a professional if you are concerned about something, and it will never be a waste of time for you or for us when it comes to checking on their teeth. We value seeing patients at a young age whether or not they need to start treatment.

At our family orthodontic practice, Bancroft-Dobrin Orthodontics, we see patients of all ages ranging as young as 4 years of age, all the way into the 80s (believe it or not!). Timing of treatment is critical and finding out the dental status early is always best so we can evaluate for potential issues or problems that could arise. At our offices, we practice with integrity and trust, so rest assured, if it isn't the appropriate time to get started then we will place your child on a complimentary recall schedule to follow up in the future. We see hundreds of early treatment patients per year and the results are exceptional. With our experience and customized approach to each individual patient, we've been able to eliminate the need for extractions of permanent teeth or eliminate surgery for impacted teeth because we intervened at the appropriate age.

If you find yourself asking, “is now the right time for my child to have an orthodontic consultation?” there must be a reason. Come see us and we will lead you to the right path for your child’s comfortable and enjoyable orthodontic journey!

Dr. Keith Dobrin (from *Bancroft Orthodontics* and *XtraOrdinary Smiles Orthodontics*) is a recognized 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 including clear aligners from national companies. Schedule your complimentary consultation appointment today!