

Different problems are best treated at different times

Some problems correct themselves as a child grows. If orthodontic treatment is required, the best age to start treatment depends on each child's individual situation. Facial growth and development of the teeth, the child's ability to cope with the treatment and other individual issues determine the best time to start.

Your orthodontist therefore prefers to assess a young child as soon as you or your dentist identify or suspect a problem. This allows your orthodontist to determine the best time to start treatment, if required.

If your orthodontist's assessment is that the problem may correct itself as your child grows, or that your child has not yet reached the best age for treatment, he or she will monitor your child's development with annual follow up visits. Usually these visits are free of charge.

Example of early treatment



Unequal jaw growth and front cross bite

After 6 months early treatment



Four years later without further treatment

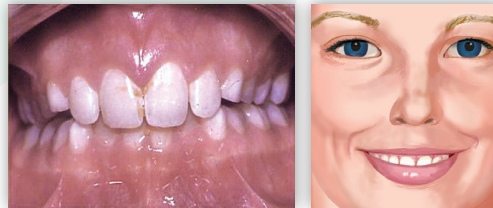


Example of early treatment

Protruding upper front teeth



After 6 months early treatment



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What is early orthodontic treatment?

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For the majority of children who will benefit from orthodontic treatment, the best time to start that treatment is when the adult teeth have emerged. This usually is around the age of 12 to 15.

However, some children will greatly benefit from orthodontic treatment at a younger age when the child's teeth are a mixture of baby and adult teeth and the child's facial bones are still very pliable. Most children treated at this age will still require a second phase of orthodontic treatment once all their adult teeth have emerged.

Does my child require early treatment?

The simple answer is that early orthodontic treatment is advisable if your child has an orthodontic concern that would be more difficult to correct if left untreated until all adult teeth have emerged, or some damage would occur if not treated early.

If you or your dentist has any concern or doubt regarding your child's alignment of teeth, bite, or proper tooth eruption, then it is advisable to have your orthodontist examine your child from as early an age as seven. Some of the problems that may benefit from early orthodontic treatment are:

- Thumb sucking and other habits or problems with mouth function;
- Protruding upper front teeth that cause the child distress and embarrassment, or risk being damaged in an accident;
- Severe crowding of teeth;

- Severe bite problems caused by the upper and lower jaws growing at a different rate;
- Upper and lower teeth not meeting properly at the front or at the back (cross bite);
- Upper and lower front teeth not closing at the front or at the back (open bite);
- Upper front teeth closing so far over the lower ones that it causes problems (deep overbite);
- Early loss of teeth or tooth structure which causes problems for adult teeth to emerge properly;
- Adult teeth not emerging properly or being impacted.



Effects of thumb sucking



Protruding upper front teeth



Severe crowding



Bite problems caused by upper jaw growing more than lower jaw



Bite problems caused by lower jaw growing more than upper jaw, including front cross bite



Back cross bite



Front open bite



Deep overbite



Holding space for adult tooth to emerge after early loss of baby tooth

Below: Emerging molar impacting another molar

