

Taking care of your teeth now alleviates problems in the future...

Orthodontics is more than just how fast crooked teeth can be straightened.

by Dr. Brad Edgren

Did you know that early orthodontic treatment can help children who are mouth breathers convert to normal, nasal breathing?

Moreover, did you know that proper early orthodontic treatment can reduce and correct the development of facial irregularities? Children as young as six to seven years of age can start to develop crossbites, underbites, and facial asymmetries. Appropriate early interceptive orthodontic treatment can often resolve these problems preventing invasive orthognathic jaw surgery as a young adult. By age seven, on average, a child has already achieved 75% of their total dentofacial growth. By age 12, 90% of a child's total dentofacial development has already occurred. So to wait until all the permanent teeth erupt into the mouth, typically between 12 -13 years of age, is undesirable because the vast majority of facial growth has already occurred, nearly guarantying the permanency of the facial irregularity.

Significant skeletal dysplasias and facial asymmetries in young patients when left untreated increasingly worsen with growth. Not all children require early interceptive treatment, however for those that do, it benefits not only their oral health but improves their self esteem at a time when it is needed most. Children can be perfectly blunt when talking to their peers. When a child is being teased about their crooked face or severely crowded teeth it takes a toll on their self

esteem that can carry on into adulthood.

In a society that wants to be proactive in healthcare, ignoring a developing child's dentition, especially one where it is obvious that a problem is developing, doesn't make sense.

Furthermore, the extraction of deciduous or permanent teeth is not always the best answer because the underlying skeletal issues were not addressed; potentially accentuating the facial irregularities. For example, it is disheartening to evaluate an adult patient who had previous orthodontic care as a teenager, but because of the lateness of the initiation or incompleteness of treatment (i.e. quick braces/ rushed treatment), the bilateral molar crossbites were never corrected. Now as an adult they suffer from TMD, upper airway obstruction, and sleep apnea due to a narrow nasal cavity that could have been addressed with proper orthodontic expansion as a child.

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fast crooked teeth can be straightened. Fast treatment is generally not the most effective treatment. Appropriate orthodontic treatment includes dentofacial orthopedics which addresses orofacial concerns with proper care during growth. All growth, including facial growth, occurs over years not months. Why rush orthodontics? When properly executed, orthodontics can significantly improve breathing, correct the bite which helps the first part of digestion, enhance esthetics, and boost self-esteem. Remember, orthodontics is more than just braces. **G**

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Before - Note the severe underbite and right molar crossbite.



After - Note the correction of the underbite and right molar crossbite.