



American Association of
Orthodontists

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Pre-teen Orthodontics

The psychological teen years of your child's life will have a profound effect upon his or her future physical and mental well-being. Seventy-five percent of all growth will take place during these years. In the case of facial development, the foundation is laid between the ages of six and eight years when the permanent teeth begin erupting.

Recently, science has developed the ability to project a young person's future facial growth. Dr. Adams performs this analysis using a computer. This technique enables the orthodontist to begin more types of treatment during childhood when they can be more effective. Prior to age ten, unfavorable growth patterns can be identified and corrected in order to provide an improved facial appearance for your child at maturity. Below are mentioned some of the advantages of early orthodontic treatment when indicated:

Early treatment, allows the orthodontist to widen and develop the dental arches. By widening the jaws, we can often create enough space to accommodate crowded teeth, thus **reducing the need for extraction of permanent teeth.**

Many problems associated with a poor bite are due to an abnormal relationship between the upper and lower jaws. Many times this is seen as a poor facial balance in the child such as a small or weak chin. Early treatment for this problem **can take advantage of a child's peak growth** years by allowing the orthodontist to **redirect growth to a more normal direction.** In this scenario, early intervention creates a better jaw relationship which **improves facial balance and esthetics.** In extreme cases of facial jaw imbalance, early treatment may **prevent or reduce the need for later facial surgery.**

Early intervention is normally separated into two phases of approximately 16 – 18 months duration. Each Phase is considered ½ of the total treatment planned for the child. **Phase I** is considered the **orthopedic phase** and can be used to achieve better jaw and tooth alignment, intercept harmful habits (thumb sucking, tongue thrusting, mouth breathing, tooth grinding, etc.), and create more room to accommodate the permanent teeth. Phase I treatment can ultimately decrease the time spent in braces (Phase 2). Phase I normally involves the use of special appliances that are less conspicuous than braces.

Phase 2 is considered to be the orthodontic phase in which the braces are normally placed on all of the teeth. This allows proper positioning of the permanent teeth between the upper and lower jaw to ensure optimal esthetics and function, and stability.

How a young person feels about themselves and the way they look creates a significant impact on their psychological and social development. An orthodontic consultation will allow us to decide the best time to begin your child's treatment. **The orthodontist considers the growing years a once in a lifetime opportunity** to use your child's growth and make positive changes that are not possible in the non growing patient!

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