

How does it feel? Orthodontic treatment generally does not cause pain and while you wear appliances you will hardly know they are there most of the time. When first fitted, braces cause some irritation and soreness in your mouth, but that soon disappears as you become used to them. You may need to take a mild analgesic such as Panadol for a few days. After your orthodontist adjusts your braces every 8 weeks or so, you may experience some tenderness and mild temporary discomfort, but rarely will you need an analgesic after these appointments.

What will I have to do? You can make a big difference to the success and speed of your orthodontic treatment by doing simple things, as your orthodontist and staff will show you:

- Keep your teeth and gums clean;
- Eat well and avoid hard or chewy foods that damage your braces;
- Strictly follow instructions about wearing elastics – if you are given them;
- See your dentists every six months.

Doing this also keeps keep your teeth and gums in the best of health for when the braces come off.

What happens after? After your braces or other appliances have come off, your teeth need to be kept in their new positions until they have settled there. Your orthodontist will therefore either fix a retaining wire to the back of your front teeth and/or give you a removable retainer plate to wear until your teeth have settled.



Your reward

All the effort will have been worth it!
You will have a good bite, straight teeth and a great smile that will make you feel better and more confident for life.



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**When I go to the
orthodontist**

Why see an orthodontist?

Orthodontics is a specialised area of dentistry that diagnoses, prevents and treats problems of the alignment of teeth and jaws.

Therefore, if you have concerns about crooked teeth or bite problems, an orthodontic examination will let you know whether you should consider treatment.

To straighten your teeth and improve your bite, orthodontists use such things as plates and braces. Straight teeth and a good bite give you a beautiful smile, help you chew better and make it easier to care for your teeth and gums.

When to see an orthodontist?

Orthodontic treatment is usually most effective in the early teens, when all adult teeth have erupted and the face is still growing. Hence, most orthodontic patients are in that age group.

Because younger faces are very malleable and grow quickly, for some patients treatment at an earlier age can make improvements that would be more difficult to achieve later, encourage jaws to grow more normally, or prevent some damage to teeth from happening. Therefore, if you have concerns about your young child's teeth or jaws, your orthodontist is happy to examine and then monitor your child's development from the age of eight, or younger.

Adults, both young and older, can also greatly benefit from orthodontic treatment. Because they have the maturity to fully cooperate with treatment and teeth with full crown height, adults have more treatment options available to them, including low visibility appliances.

First visit to your orthodontist

The aim of your first visit is to find out whether you need orthodontic treatment and if so, what would be the best time for you to start it.

When you arrive for your appointment, the orthodontic staff make you welcome and ask you - or your parent if you are young - to complete a questionnaire regarding your age and health, who is your dentist, etc. You then meet your orthodontist, who will talk with you about your concerns and expectations. Next, he or she will examine your face, jaws, teeth and gums to diagnose whether you need orthodontic treatment or not and discuss that with you.

If you do not need treatment at the time, but may need it in the future, your orthodontist will take photos of your face and mouth and invite you to return for a review visit at a later date. Review visits are usually at no extra charge and you will receive a reminder before your next visit is due.

Preparing for your treatment



often impressions of your teeth so the orthodontist can make a plaster or digital model of your teeth and how they close. The orthodontic staff will then usually make an appointment for your detailed treatment consultation with your orthodontist.

Taking records: If the diagnosis suggests that your treatment should start soon, your orthodontist will take "records" of your face and mouth to use for a detailed diagnosis of your situation before preparing your personal treatment plan. Records nearly always include photos and x-rays of your teeth and face, and

Treatment consultation: In this, your orthodontist discusses with you the problems that need treatment, what your treatment options are and their likely duration and outcome. You can ask questions and discuss any concerns you may have. Your orthodontist will also explain the fee for your treatment and methods of payment. If you have health insurance, your fund can provide you with information about rebates.

Treatment decision: When you decide to start treatment, the orthodontic staff will set up a series of appointments for you. If you have not seen your dentist recently, your orthodontist will ask you to see your dentist to have your teeth thoroughly cleaned and any dental work completed before starting your orthodontic treatment.

Your treatment



How long does it take?

As a young teenager, you may expect your orthodontic treatment to take about 24 months. Of course, some treatments can be shorter while more complex ones can take longer. During that time you will need to visit your orthodontist every 8 weeks or so to have your braces adjusted as your teeth gradually move towards their desired positions.

Treatment of young children is usually of much shorter duration. Full orthodontic treatment of adults generally takes longer than for teenagers because teeth move more slowly once the face has stopped growing. However, many adults seek partial treatment over a shorter period of time.