

# Orthodontics

## Overbites and overjets

**D**r Deborah Sykes would like to tell you about orthodontics, so that you can decide whether you might need orthodontic treatment.

**What is an overbite and an overjet?**

Sometimes the relationship between the top and bottom jaw does not match. The top jaw may be forward of the bottom jaw and is called an overjet. This can look as if the top teeth are "bucky" or too far forward. The overbite is how much the top and bottom teeth overlap.

**What causes an overjet?**

The common causes of an increased overjet include:

1. Crowded or overlapping teeth.
2. Thumb or finger sucking habit causing the top teeth to stick out.
3. The lower jaw is too far back and makes the top teeth look prominent.

**How do you fix an overjet?**

There are several different options to correct an overjet depending on the severity and the true nature of the problem. These include:

1. Stop the thumb habit early enough and let the problem subside.
2. Braces to correct the crowding.
3. Functional appliances or growth plates to bring the jaw forward — these can be removable in a younger child between eight and 11 years of age or fixed in children up to 18 years of age.
4. In adults jaw surgery may be needed to bring the jaw forward.

**What is a removable functional appliance?**

The functional appliance that Dr Sykes makes consists of removable plates that work on the upper and lower jaw at the same time. It is called a "Clark Twin Block". The plates are worn for at least 12 months full-time during growth. Night time wear may then be required for a few

### AT A GLANCE

**DR DEBORAH SYKES, ORTHODONTIST**

**WHAT:** Professional orthodontic care. No referral necessary for health fund purposes

**WHERE:** 1424 Sturt St, Ballarat

**CONTACT:** 5331 9489 for an appointment

more months to keep the jaw stable. They are removed for cleaning and sometimes eating.

**What is the ideal time to start growth treatments?**

The best time to start functional plates or a growth treatment is just before children start their pubertal growth spurt, so that the growth of the face and skeleton can be used to direct the growth of the jaws. This is usually about 10 to 12 years of age. Younger children can be started as early as eight-years-old, especially if the prominent teeth are at risk of being traumatised or broken if there are social problems because teeth stick out or speech is a problem.

**How will I know if my child needs this treatment?**

The best thing to do is for children to have an early consultation with Dr Deborah Sykes so that the best timing of treatment can be decided. At least then it is not going to be too late to do a growth treatment because your children has finished growing. You do not have to wait until all the permanent teeth have come through before you start orthodontics, in fact sometimes this is too late to correct some problems easily.

■ Ring the surgery now for an appointment on 5331 9489 (no referral necessary for health fund purposes).

*Keep smiling, it makes you feel good!*

## DR DEBORAH SYKES

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### ORTHODONTIST



**Phone 5331 9489**  
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