

The key to the perfect smile

In the second of a series of articles, Dr Deborah Sykes answers some commonly asked questions about orthodontics

What age should you see an orthodontist?

We like to see children about 7-9 years old for their first examination. This can help to avoid more serious problems later.

Why should children see an orthodontist so young?

There are many reasons why children may need an early orthodontic exam:

- Are all the baby and second teeth present and are they developing properly?
- Are the teeth growing straight or are they crooked and crowded?
- Does the bite work or function properly?
- Do the top and bottom jaws align well?
- Straight teeth help you to keep the teeth and gums healthier.

What is early orthodontic treatment?

Early orthodontic treatment usually involves a removable plate and can correct:

- Minor crowding, even if all the permanent teeth are not yet present
- Simple bite problems; such as expansion of the upper jaw so that it fits properly over the bottom jaw
- More complex bite problems; such as 'bucky teeth' can also be corrected with two removable plates. These are called functional plates and this is a growth treatment and will be covered in another article.

How long will this treatment take?

Usually the removable plates are used for about 12 months until the problem is corrected.

What is the plate made from?

Your removable plate is made from a plastic base and wires. The wires are there to either hold the plate in place (clasps) or to move the teeth (springs). The plates are made in the

colour of your choice and sparkles can even be added!

How often do I come for appointments?

Once the plate is fitted you will need to come back to the surgery for appointments every four-six weeks depending on the type of plate you have.

Will I still need fixed braces later?

The removable plates will help the development of the permanent teeth and jaws and help to minimise and sometimes avoid the need for braces later.

If plates are not used the problem of crowded teeth can often be worse later on.

It is important to have an early assessment to see if any problems can be diagnosed and treated while the teeth are still growing

For more information or to book an appointment, phone 5331 9489.