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AGD:FACTSHEET

Compiled for you by the Academy of General Dentistry

Does AGD offer any resources for my family and me?

Yes! Check out AGD's Web site, *www.agd.org*, to search more than 300 oral health topics, post a dental question, sign up for e-newsletters or find an AGD dentist. Or, call 1.877.2X.A.YEAR (1.877.292.9327) to be put in touch with an operator who will provide the names, addresses, and phone numbers of AGD members.

ORTHODONTICS

What is orthodontics, and why do people get braces?

Orthodontics is a special discipline of dentistry concerned with aligning the teeth and jaws to improve one's smile and oral health. A dentist usually recommends braces to improve the patient's physical "orofacial" appearance. Through orthodontic treatment, problems like crooked or crowded teeth, overbites or under bites, incorrect jaw position, and disorders of the jaw joints are corrected.

When is the right time for braces?

Patients with orthodontic problems can benefit from treatment at nearly any age. An ideal time for placement of braces is between ages 8 and 14, while the head and mouth are still growing and teeth are more amenable to straightening. And braces aren't just for kids. Adults are increasingly wearing braces to correct minor problems and improve their smiles.

What kind of braces will I have to wear?

Your dentist will know what appliance is best for your particular condition, but the patient often has a choice. Braces generally come in three varieties. The most popular type of braces uses brackets (metal or plastic) that are bonded to teeth. "Lingual" braces are braces fitted behind the teeth on the tongue (lingual) side so they are hidden from view. "Band" braces cover most of your teeth with metal bands that wrap around the teeth. All types use wires to move the teeth to the desired position. Invisible braces utilizing a series of clear plastic trays are an alternative to conventional bracketing and have become popular in recent years.

How long will I have to wear braces?

That depends upon your treatment plan. Patients with more complicated spacing or bite problems, and older patients, generally have longer treatment periods. Most patients wear full braces for between 18 and 30 months, followed by a retainer, which must be worn to set and align tissues surrounding straightened teeth.

Will treatment be uncomfortable?

At each visit, the interconnecting wires are changed. The wires place mild pressure on the brackets or bands to shift teeth or jaws gradually into a desired position. Your teeth and jaws may feel slightly sore after your appointments, but the discomfort is brief.

Do I have to avoid any foods?

Your dentist will instruct you on which foods you should avoid to best maintain your braces and your oral health.

How do I clean my teeth with braces?

With braces, oral hygiene is more important than ever. Braces have tiny spaces where food particles and plaque can be trapped. Your dentist will show you how to properly brush and floss your teeth.

Who will provide my orthodontic treatment?

Your family general dentist is responsible for coordinating your dental treatment, which may include orthodontics. Some dentists provide orthodontic treatment in office, while others may refer you to an orthodontist to coordinate your care.