

Teeth - orthodontic treatments

Orthodontic treatment is often recommended to correct abnormalities in jaw and tooth position, such as an overbite or protruding teeth. An overbite is when the top teeth bite over the bottom teeth more than normal. In extreme cases, the edges of the front teeth can damage and strip away the gum and loosen the lower teeth or the edges of the lower teeth can cut into the roof of the mouth.

Protruding, or 'buck' teeth is when the front teeth are positioned further forward than normal. A person with protruding teeth is more susceptible to tooth loss from accidents and may suffer from speech or eating problems. Many people also choose to correct protruding teeth for cosmetic reasons.

These problems should ideally be corrected in adolescence. Ask your dentist to recommend an orthodontist for advice on these conditions.

Checking for these conditions

Overbite

With your teeth closed, look at yourself in the mirror face on and check whether you can see your lower teeth. Normally you would expect to see about half of your bottom teeth. If you see less than half, you may have an overbite.

Protruding teeth

Look at yourself in the mirror from the side and see if your teeth (either top or bottom) stick out more than normal.

What orthodontic treatment involves

The orthodontist will take detailed records of your teeth and jaw, diagnose the problem, plan the treatment and carry out the care.

Treatment usually includes fixed braces followed by a retainer plate. For adults, fixed braces are often needed for two to three years, followed by a retainer (plate) for up to two years. This is generally longer than the time needed for adolescents.

Costs vary

Costs vary depending on the type and severity of the problem and the amount of treatment needed. On average, expect to spend about \$4000 to 5000 over the treatment period.

Where to get help

- Your local dentist
- Dental Health Services Victoria Tel. (03) 9341 0428, 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday; Tel. (03) 9341 0345 after hours
- Royal Children's Hospital Tel.(03) 9345 5344, 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday; Tel.(03) 9345 5522 after hours.

Things to remember

- Orthodontic treatment corrects conditions such as an overbite or protruding teeth.
- Ideally, corrective work should begin in adolescence. However, orthodontic treatment is effective for adults as well.
- If you think you or your child has a problem, ask your dentist to refer you to an orthodontist for advice or treatment.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Dental Health Services Victoria

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