

# THE ULTIMATE PARENT'S GUIDE TO **ORTHODONTICS**

When, Why and What You Need to Know

SEAPOINT CLINIC

## Introduction

The world of orthodontics can be a scary place sometimes and many parents have a natural fear of the uncertainty over timeframes and costs that can be involved.

In this ultimate parent's guide to orthodontics, we provide valuable information to help you navigate the world of braces and ensure your child's smile receives the care it deserves. From understanding the right time for orthodontic check-ups to exploring the various types of braces, we've got it all covered.

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## 1: WHEN TO GET ORTHODONTIC CHECK-UPS:

- Exploring the importance of early orthodontic evaluations for children.
- Understanding the signs that indicate the need for an orthodontic check-up.
- Guidelines for scheduling regular check-ups and monitoring your child's dental development.

## 2: THE BENEFITS OF ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT:

- Explaining the significance of orthodontic treatment beyond cosmetic improvements.
- Highlighting how braces can address bite issues, teeth misalignment, and jaw irregularities.



- Discussing the long-term oral health benefits and enhanced overall well-being that orthodontic treatment can provide.

### 3. TYPES OF BRACES AVAILABLE:

- Breaking down the different types of braces, including traditional metal braces, ceramic braces, lingual braces, and clear aligners.
- Exploring the pros and cons of each option, considering factors such as visibility, comfort, and treatment duration.
- Providing insights to help parents and their children make informed decisions about the most suitable braces for their specific needs.

### 4. TREATMENT DURATION AND PROCESS:

- Outlining the typical timeline for orthodontic treatment and the factors that can influence the duration.
- Describing the step-by-step process of getting braces, including initial consultations, X-rays, impressions, and adjustments.
- Addressing common concerns related to discomfort, diet restrictions, oral hygiene, and maintaining regular check-ups during the treatment period.

## 5. UNDERSTANDING ORTHODONTIC COSTS:

- Shedding light on the factors that influence the cost of orthodontic treatment.
- Discussing potential tax relief from revenue and flexible payment options.
- Providing approximate cost ranges for different types of braces to help parents plan and budget accordingly.

## EXPLORING THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY ORTHODONTIC EVALUATIONS FOR CHILDREN

Early orthodontic evaluations for children are crucial in identifying and addressing potential dental issues at an early stage. **Around the age of 7**, when the first set of permanent molars and incisors have emerged, it's recommended to schedule an orthodontic check-up for your child. At this age, your child's teeth and jaws are still developing, making it easier to detect any underlying problems that may require future treatment.

During the early evaluation, the orthodontist can identify issues such as bite problems, overcrowding, or dental alignment concerns. By catching these problems early, the orthodontist can create a proactive treatment plan to guide your child's dental growth and development, **potentially reducing the need for more invasive treatments later on.**

### UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNS THAT INDICATE THE NEED FOR AN ORTHODONTIC CHECK-UP:

As a parent, being aware of certain signs can help you determine if your child needs an orthodontic evaluation. Look out for the following indicators:

# Problems to Watch for in Growing Children

Malocclusions (“bad bites”) like those illustrated below, may benefit from early diagnosis and referral to an orthodontic specialist for a full evaluation.



**Crossbite of Front Teeth**

Top teeth are behind bottom teeth



**Crossbite of Back Teeth**

Top teeth are to the inside of bottom teeth



**Crowding**



**Open Bite**

Front teeth do not meet when back teeth are closed



**Protrusion**



**Deep Bite**



**Underbite**



**Spacing**



**Oral Habits**

- **Crowded or Crooked Teeth:** If your child's teeth appear crowded, overlapping, or crooked, it may be a sign of dental alignment issues.
- **Early or Late Loss of Baby Teeth:** If your child experiences the early loss of baby teeth (before the age of 5) or delayed loss of baby teeth, it could indicate potential dental problems.
- **Difficulty Chewing or Biting:** If your child has difficulty chewing or biting, experiences discomfort while eating, or complains of jaw pain, it's essential to have their dental health evaluated.
- **Breathing Through the Mouth:** Chronic mouth breathing, especially during the day, may indicate jaw alignment issues that require orthodontic attention.
- **Thumb Sucking or Soother Use:** Prolonged thumb sucking or pacifier use beyond the age of 3-4 can affect dental development and alignment.

If you notice any of these signs, consider scheduling an orthodontic check-up to assess your child's dental health and determine if treatment is needed.



## GUIDELINES FOR SCHEDULING REGULAR CHECK-UPS AND MONITORING YOUR CHILD'S DENTAL DEVELOPMENT:

To ensure your child's dental health remains on track, follow these guidelines:

- **Early Evaluation:** Schedule your child's first orthodontic evaluation around the age of 7, as recommended by your dentist.
- **Regular Dental Check-ups:** Continue with regular dental check-ups with your family dentist every six months. These visits help monitor your child's dental development and detect any emerging issues.
- **Orthodontic Specialist Visits:** Based on the initial evaluation and your dentist's recommendation, schedule visits with an orthodontic specialist as needed for ongoing monitoring or treatment.
- **Watch for Changes:** Keep an eye on your child's dental health and observe any changes or new issues that may arise. Promptly address any concerns with your dentist or orthodontist.
- **Maintain Excellent Oral Hygiene:** Encourage good oral hygiene habits in your child, including regular brushing, flossing, and limiting sugary snacks and drinks. Proper oral hygiene supports dental health and can positively impact orthodontic treatment outcomes. Using plaque disclosing tablets can be a useful way to help children visualise the plaque on their teeth to improve technique.

## THE BENEFITS OF ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

Orthodontic treatment offers benefits that extend **far beyond cosmetic enhancements**. While achieving a beautiful and confident smile is a desirable outcome, the primary goal of orthodontics is to improve the functionality and overall health of the mouth. By correcting dental issues, orthodontic treatment contributes to **better oral health, which, in turn, positively impacts a person's overall well-being**.

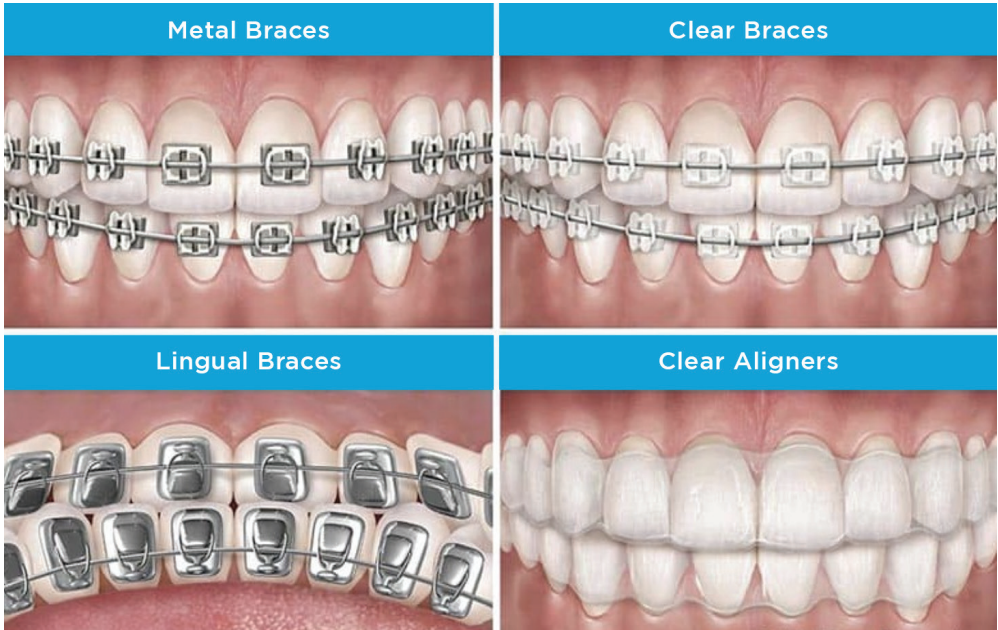
- **Bite Issues:** Orthodontic treatment can address bite problems such as overbites, underbites, crossbites, and open bites. These misalignments can lead to uneven pressure on the teeth, resulting in wear and tear over time. By correcting the bite, braces distribute the forces evenly, promoting better chewing function and reducing the risk of dental damage.
- **Teeth Misalignment:** Crooked, crowded, or overlapping teeth not only affect the appearance of the smile but can also impede proper oral hygiene. Misaligned teeth are challenging to clean thoroughly, making them more susceptible to plaque buildup and cavities. Braces gradually align the teeth into their proper positions, making it easier to maintain good oral hygiene and reducing the risk of dental issues.
- **Jaw Irregularities:** Some people may experience jaw irregularities, such as an uneven jawline or jaw joint problems (TMJ disorders). Orthodontic treatment can help align the jaws properly, providing better jaw function, reducing discomfort, and improving overall facial symmetry.

## LONG-TERM ORAL HEALTH BENEFITS AND ENHANCED OVERALL WELL-BEING THAT ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT CAN PROVIDE:

Orthodontic treatment not only enhances oral health but also contributes to improved overall well-being in various ways:

- **Oral Health:** Straightening misaligned teeth and correcting bite issues improve oral health by reducing the risk of gum disease, tooth decay, and excessive wear on teeth. Properly aligned teeth are easier to clean, promoting better oral hygiene and reducing the likelihood of future dental complications.
- **Confidence and Self-Esteem:** A beautiful smile can significantly impact an individual's self-esteem and confidence. Orthodontic treatment can lead to enhanced self-confidence, encouraging individuals to smile more freely and engage confidently in social interactions.
- **Improved Chewing and Digestion:** Properly aligned teeth and corrected bite issues contribute to improved chewing function. Efficient chewing ensures that food is properly broken down, aiding digestion and nutrient absorption.
- **Speech Improvement:** Some dental issues, such as misaligned teeth, can affect speech clarity. Orthodontic treatment can correct these problems, leading to improved speech and clearer communication.
- **Preventive Measures:** Orthodontic treatment can prevent potential dental problems before they worsen, saving individuals from more extensive and costly treatments in the future.

## TYPES OF BRACES AVAILABLE



- **1. Traditional Metal Braces:** Traditional metal braces are the most common and recognisable type of braces. They consist of metal brackets attached to the front surface of the teeth and connected by metal wires. These braces are highly effective in correcting various dental issues, including severe misalignments and complex bite problems.

- **2. Ceramic Braces:** Ceramic braces are similar in design to traditional metal braces but use tooth-coloured or clear ceramic brackets. This makes them less noticeable compared to metal braces, blending in better with the natural colour of the teeth. Ceramic braces are a popular choice for those who desire a more discreet orthodontic option.
  
- **3. Lingual Braces:** Lingual braces are unique as they are placed on the back surface of the teeth, making them virtually invisible from the front. They work similarly to traditional braces but offer a hidden orthodontic solution. Lingual braces are an ideal choice for individuals who prefer the aesthetics of unseen braces. These are less commonly used as they can be quite uncomfortable.
  
- **4. Clear Aligners:** Clear aligners, such as Seapoint Clear Aligners and Invisalign, are a removable and virtually invisible orthodontic option. These custom-made aligners gradually shift the teeth into the desired positions. Clear aligners are popular for their convenience, allowing users to remove them for eating, brushing, and special occasions.

## EXPLORING THE PROS AND CONS OF EACH OPTION

### 1. TRADITIONAL METAL BRACES:

- **Pros:** Highly effective for all types of dental issues, including severe misalignments. Generally more affordable than other options.
- **Cons:** More noticeable due to the metal brackets and wires. May cause slight discomfort or irritation during the adjustment period.

### 2. CERAMIC BRACES:

- **Pros:** Less noticeable than metal braces due to tooth-coloured or clear brackets. Suitable for moderate dental issues. They can blend with the natural tooth colour, making them more aesthetically pleasing.
- **Cons:** Ceramic brackets can be more prone to staining if proper oral hygiene is not maintained. They might be slightly more expensive than traditional metal braces.

### 3. LINGUAL BRACES:

- **Pros:** Virtually invisible from the front, providing a discreet orthodontic option. Suitable for various dental issues.
- **Cons:** Can be more challenging to clean and adjust compared to traditional braces. They might take longer to get used to due to their position on the back of the teeth. Generally, they are more expensive than traditional braces. May be more uncomfortable and interfere with speech. Few orthodontists do them.

### 4. CLEAR ALIGNERS:

- **Pros:** Virtually invisible, providing a highly discreet orthodontic option. Removable, allowing for easy maintenance of oral hygiene and eating habits. Comfortable and less likely to cause irritation.
- **Cons:** May not be suitable for complex dental issues or severe misalignments. Requires strict compliance with wearing the aligners as instructed for effective results. Generally, they are more expensive than traditional braces.

## PROVIDING INSIGHTS TO HELP PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS:

When choosing the most suitable braces for their specific needs, parents and their children should consider the following factors:

- **1. Dental Issues:** The severity of the dental issues plays a significant role in determining the most appropriate braces. Some options might be more suitable for complex cases, while others are better suited for milder misalignments.
- **2. Visibility Preferences:** Consider the level of visibility desired for the braces. Some individuals may prioritise aesthetics and choose more discreet options like ceramic braces or clear aligners.
- **3. Comfort:** Evaluate the comfort level of each option. Some individuals may find certain braces more comfortable, while others might prefer the familiarity of traditional metal braces.
- **4. Treatment Duration:** Discuss the expected treatment duration with the dentist or orthodontist for each option. Some braces may require a shorter treatment period, while others may take longer to achieve the desired results.
- **5. Lifestyle and Maintenance:** Consider the lifestyle and daily habits of the child. Clear aligners, for example, require dedication to wearing them consistently, while traditional braces are fixed and require regular check-ups for adjustments.



## TREATMENT DURATION AND PROCESS

Orthodontic treatment timelines vary based on individual dental needs and the complexity of the issues being addressed. On average, orthodontic treatment can last anywhere from several months to a few years. Average is around 12-18 months. Here is a general outline of the typical timeline and factors that may influence the duration:



- **1. Initial Consultation:** The orthodontic journey begins with an initial consultation. During this appointment, the orthodontist will thoroughly examine the patient's teeth, jaws, and facial structure. X-rays, 3d digital scans and photographs may be taken to create a comprehensive treatment plan tailored to the child's needs.
- **2. Treatment Planning:** After the examination and assessment, the orthodontist will discuss the treatment plan with the child and their parents. This plan outlines the recommended braces type, estimated treatment duration, and the anticipated results.
- **3. Braces Placement:** Once the treatment plan is approved, the next step is getting the braces placed. The orthodontic team will carefully bond the brackets to the teeth and attach the archwires. This process is generally painless and can be completed in one visit. If aligners are being used, they will be fitted & instruction given on correct wear and removal.
- **4. Adjustment Period:** The first few days after getting braces may involve some discomfort as the teeth and gums adjust to the new pressure. Over-the-counter pain relievers and orthodontic wax can help alleviate any soreness or irritation.
- **5. Monitoring Progress:** During the treatment period, regular adjustments are scheduled every 4-8 weeks on average. These adjustments involve tightening or replacing the archwires, which help guide the teeth into their desired positions. With aligners more aligners will be given as treatment progresses.
- **6. Treatment Completion:** Once the teeth have moved into their proper positions, the braces will be removed. The orthodontist may provide retainers to help maintain the new alignment while the teeth stabilise.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING TREATMENT DURATION

- **Dental Complexity:** The severity of the dental issues being addressed will impact the treatment duration. More complex cases may require longer treatment periods.
- **Patient Age:** Younger patients may experience quicker results due to their developing jawbone and dental structure.
- **Patient Compliance:** Patient cooperation is crucial for successful treatment. Following the orthodontist's instructions, wearing rubber bands, and maintaining proper oral hygiene can influence treatment duration.

## ADDRESSING COMMON CONCERNS DURING ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

- **1. Discomfort:** While braces may cause initial discomfort, it typically subsides within a few days. Over-the-counter pain relievers and orthodontic wax can alleviate sore spots.
- **2. Diet Restrictions:** Patients are advised to avoid sticky, hard, or crunchy foods that may damage the braces if wires are used. Opt for softer foods and cut fruits and vegetables into smaller pieces. With aligners there are no restrictions on diet.
- **3. Oral Hygiene:** Proper oral hygiene is crucial during orthodontic treatment. Brushing after meals, flossing with special orthodontic flossers, and using mouthwash are essential to prevent cavities and gum problems.

- **4. Maintaining Regular Check-ups:** Attending scheduled appointments is vital to ensure treatment progress and make necessary adjustments.

By following these guidelines and maintaining good oral hygiene, your child can achieve the best possible results and enjoy a beautifully aligned smile after completing their orthodontic journey.

## UNDERSTANDING ORTHODONTIC COSTS

Orthodontic treatment is an investment in your child's oral health and confident smile. While the cost of orthodontic treatment can vary depending on several factors, it is essential to understand these aspects to make informed decisions about your child's dental care.



Highly Experienced Orthodontic Team

- **1. Factors Influencing the Cost:** The total cost of orthodontic treatment is influenced by various factors, including:
  - **Type of Braces:** Different types of braces, such as traditional metal braces, ceramic braces, lingual braces, or clear aligners, have varying costs due to the materials and technology involved.
  - **Complexity of the Case:** The severity of your child's dental issues will impact the complexity of the treatment and may influence the overall cost.
  - **Treatment Duration:** Longer treatment periods may involve more appointments and adjustments, affecting the overall cost.
  - **Orthodontist's Expertise:** Highly experienced and reputable orthodontists may charge higher fees for their specialised services.
  - **Location:** The cost of living and demand for orthodontic services in your area can affect the treatment cost.
- **2 Revenue Tax Relief:** Up to 20% of the cost of treatment may be returned via tax relief. We can provide you with a Med II form if necessary to make a claim against your income tax.
- **3. Flexible Payment Options:** We offer flexible payment plans to make treatment more manageable for families. These plans may allow you to spread the cost of treatment over several months or years, eliminating the need for a lump-sum payment upfront. Additionally, Humm can offer financing options to accommodate various budgetary needs.

#### 4. APPROXIMATE COST RANGES FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF BRACES:

Please refer to our Pricing page on [www.seapointclinic.ie/fees](http://www.seapointclinic.ie/fees) for more information.

In conclusion, understanding the factors that influence orthodontic costs, tax relief options, and available payment plans can help you plan and budget for your child's orthodontic treatment effectively.

Your child's smile is a valuable asset, and investing in quality orthodontic care can lead to long-lasting oral health benefits and increased self-confidence. Schedule a consultation with a qualified orthodontist to explore the best treatment options and financial arrangements that suit your child's needs and your family's budget.

Book your appointment now on [www.seapointclinic.ie/book-now](http://www.seapointclinic.ie/book-now)