

Mississauga Dental Specialists

Braces Invisalign Teeth Gums & Implants

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What is Orthodontics?

Orthodontics is one of many dental specialties. The word “orthodontics” is derived from the Greek words “orthos”, meaning proper or straight and “odons”, meaning teeth. Orthodontics is specifically concerned with diagnosing and treating tooth misalignment and irregularity in the jaw area. Initially, orthodontic treatments were geared toward the treatment of teens and pre-teens, but these days around 30 percent of orthodontic patients are adults.

There are many advantages to well-aligned teeth, including easier cleaning, better oral hygiene, clearer speech and a more pleasant smile. Though orthodontic treatment can be effective at any age, the American Dental Association suggests that an orthodontic assessment should be performed around the age of seven. The earlier orthodontic treatment begins, the more quickly the problem can be successfully resolved.

What problems can be treated with orthodontics?

Orthodontics is a versatile branch of dentistry that can be used alone, or in combination with maxillofacial or cosmetic dentistry.

Some of the common conditions treated with orthodontics are:

- **Anteroposterior deviations** – The discrepancy between a pair of closed jaws is known as an anteroposterior discrepancy or deviation. An example of such a discrepancy would be an overbite (where the upper teeth are further forward than the lower teeth), or an under-bite (where the lower teeth are further forward than the upper teeth).
- **Overcrowding** – Overcrowding is a common orthodontic problem. It occurs when there is an insufficient space for the normal growth and development of adult teeth.
- **Aesthetic problems** – A beautiful straight smile may be marred by a single misaligned tooth. This tooth can be realigned with ease and accuracy by the orthodontist. Alternatively, orthodontists can also work to reshape and restructure the lips, jaw or the face.

Orthodontic Solutions

Orthodontics is a technologically advanced field which offers many sophisticated solutions to malocclusions and other cosmetic problems. The orthodontist will generally perform a visual examination, panoramic X-rays, and study models (bite impressions) in order to assess the exact nature of the discrepancy.

When a diagnosis has been made, there are a variety of orthodontic treatment options available.

Some of the most common solutions include:

- **Fixed orthodontic braces** – A metal or ceramic dental base is affixed to each tooth, and a dental wire is inserted through each base. The orthodontist is able to gradually train the teeth into proper alignment by regularly adjusting the wire. When the desired results are achieved, the fixed dental braces are completely removed.
- **Removable appliances** – There are a wide range of removable appliances commonly used in orthodontics, including headgear that correct overbites, Hawley retainers that improve the position of the teeth even as the jawbone reforms, and facemasks which are used to correct an under-bite.
- **Invisalign®** – This is a newer, removable type of dental aligner that is completely transparent. Invisalign® does not interfere with eating because of its removable nature, and mechanically works in the same way as the traditional metal dental braces. Not all patients are candidates for Invisalign®.

If you have any questions or concerns about orthodontics, please contact our office.