Orthodontics for Adults

Adults have every reason to expect a terrific smile. Most of the technology and techniques used to improve the bite of children and teens are available to adults. There are also certain products that are best suited for adults, such as invisible aligners. If you have a concern over the appearance or functionality of your smile, chances are orthodontics can help.

What Can Orthodontics Do For Me?

Orthodontics for adults can address many different problems. You may have crooked or crowded teeth, or over or under bites left untreated from childhood. You may have a problem with your jaw or have had an injury to your mouth that affects the alignment of your teeth. Aside from your appearance, these conditions may make it difficult to keep your teeth clean, causing decay and periodontal disease.

“For fifty one years of my life, I did not smile! I had a severe open bite and a large gap. Dr. Lopez’s skills have allowed me to feel so elated to smile! I am very pleased with his service.”
—Linda Ann Minger

James I Lopez, DDS, MS, MS, PC
Pediatric Dentistry & Orthodontics
Specializing in Orthodontics for Children and Adults!

The only dual-trained specialist in orthodontics and pediatric dentistry in the Columbus region!

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Untreated orthodontic problems also contribute to headaches, earaches, and biting, chewing and speaking problems. A better bite is also easier on the digestive system as you are able to chew and digest their food properly.

Unfortunately, adult orthodontic treatment may not be suitable for all patients. Worn or abraded teeth are difficult to treat and excessively receded gums, bone loss or root resorption caused by gum disease may require periodontal therapy before orthodontic treatment can begin.

**Evaluating Your Smile**
At your initial consultation, Dr. Smith will personally explain all recommended procedures and will keep you fully informed about every aspect of your treatment. After gathering important information—which may include models, x-rays, and facial photographs—we can determine if orthodontics is not only right for you and identify your orthodontic needs and treatment plan.

**Available Options**
There are several options of braces in varying degrees of visibility. We offer mini stainless steel braces, gold braces, and clear braces. Especially for adults that may be concerned about the appearance traditional braces, we are pleased to offer the Invisalign® System, a series of clear plastic aligners that gradually move teeth into the correct position.

**Living With Braces / Care**
When treatment is started, it is typical for adults to feel as if their teeth are "loose." This is because ligaments permanently anchor the teeth in the jaw and hose ligaments need to be loosened to move the teeth. A child's or teenager's teeth do not have these mature ligaments yet. The feeling is temporary as the ligaments tighten again once treatment is completed.

As with younger patients, your mouth will be tender after a week or so after banding and there may be some discomfort when your braces are tightened. An over-the-counter acetaminophen pain reliever will effectively relieve your discomfort. If it does not, call our office so that we can check your appliance carefully.

Your family dentist plays an important role in optimum oral health before, during and after orthodontic treatment. It is important to return to your general dentist on a regular basis for exams and oral hygiene visits. Our staff will also teach you how to take care of your teeth, gums and braces during treatment as length of treatment as well as treatment success depends, in part, on your attentiveness to dental care at home.

Our office will provide you with a list of hard and sticky foods to avoid as certain foods can cause breakage of your appliance. Clean your appliance carefully each time you brush - brushing and mouthwash will keep the appliance free of food and prevent irritation. Rinsing your mouth with water after sugary drinks will also help keep your appliance clean.

**The Differences Between Treating Children and Adults**
Adults can reap the same benefits from orthodontics as children can but treatment methods and timing may differ. Adults cannot take advantage of the benefits of early treatment, which can capitalize on the child's natural growth to help move teeth. For instance, an adult jaw cannot be orthodontically enlarged to accommodate crowded teeth. Some adults may require surgery or extractions to achieve this result.

Adults also heal slower than children so treatment cannot be as aggressive. There needs to be more time between appointments to allow for healing; you can expect your braces to be tightened every 3 to six weeks. In total, adult treatment can take from 18 months to three years.

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