

Early Prevention / Treatment

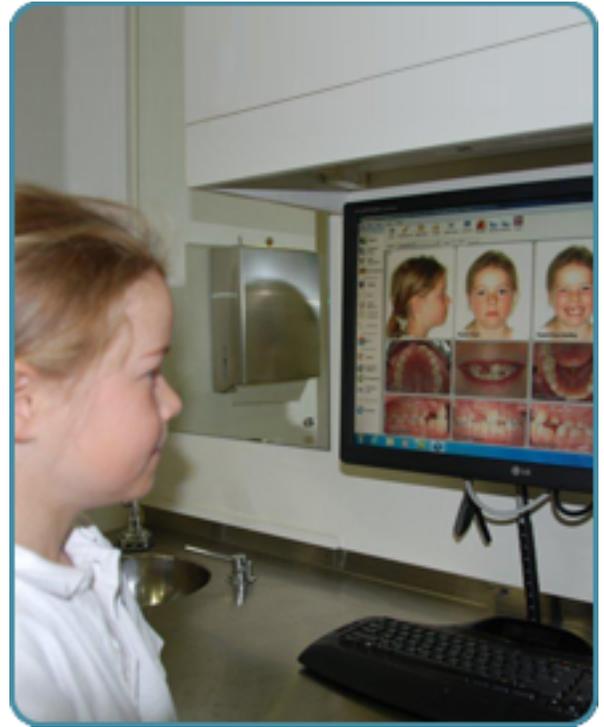
Why should my child be seen at a young age and what problems would benefit from having been diagnosed early?

This is one of many questions surrounding the topic of early orthodontic assessment for children. The New Zealand Association of Orthodontists recommends that children see an orthodontist no later than age nine.

An early assessment will help us evaluate whether your child will benefit from an early phase of orthodontic treatment or if there are any developing problems which could be minimised with the correct timely intervention.

Early treatments can be active (for example correcting a crossbite when the top front teeth develop behind the lowers), or passive such as holding space if a baby tooth is lost or extracted early.

Developing crowding can indicate the use of a passive holding arch which maintains space for the permanent teeth, reducing the need for extractions in the future.



How to tell if your child may need early orthodontic treatment:

- Early or late loss of baby teeth (your child should typically start losing teeth around age six, and will have all their permanent teeth in around age thirteen). Baby canines which are retained may indicate an impacted permanent canine tooth.
- Narrow upper dental arch
- Mouth breathing
- Habits: Your child continues sucking their thumb or finger after age five
- Speech impediments
- Protruding teeth (the top teeth are forward of the bottom)
- Teeth that don't come together in a normal manner or even at all
- Top teeth behind or inside the bottom teeth when teeth together (crossbites)
- Crowded or very spaced front teeth at around age seven or eight
- There are several common problems in the developing dentition. e.g. extra teeth or impacted teeth which are only visible on a scan X-ray. A routine assessment at an early age would pick up these potential problems which can often be minimised by some early intervention.

What causes orthodontic problems, and how will early prevention benefit my child?

Orthodontic problems such as crowding, spacing, and poor jaw relationships can be caused by a multiple of factors including genetics, the function of the mouth structures, early or late loss of baby teeth, and habits.

An early assessment including an X-ray scan, even at age seven to eight years, can give you an outline of any developing problems and if any early intervention will be helpful in minimising the developing problems. This may result in the reduced likelihood of extractions or surgery in the future.

If your child is between the ages of seven and eight and shows signs of needing orthodontic care, or if you have been directed by your family dentist to visit an orthodontist, please contact our practice and schedule an appointment. Our team will provide your child with an initial exam, and discuss with you the best steps to take toward caring for your child's smile.

If no treatment is indicated at this early stage, we will put your child on 'recall' with annual checks at no extra cost to monitor when would be the most appropriate time to begin any needed treatment.