

Orthodontic treatment

What is orthodontic treatment?

Orthodontic treatment is a way of straightening or moving teeth with braces, to improve the appearance of the teeth or how they work.

Orthodontic treatment is generally carried out in children, but it is increasingly common for adults to have orthodontic treatment. In children, it is normally necessary to wait for most of the teeth to come through before starting treatment; this is usually around 9-13 years of age. Some treatments work best during the adolescent growth spurt, which occurs earlier in girls.

Most orthodontic treatments in the practice are carried out by Paul Downes, a general practitioner who has had extra training in orthodontics. He has had over 20 years experience in straightening teeth. Sometimes a patient may be referred to a Hospital Consultant or Specialist Orthodontist for an opinion or treatment. A full assessment, usually with x-rays, photographs and plaster models is followed by a discussion about what treatment options are possible.

The most common braces are 'fixed' (or, as children like to call them, 'train tracks').



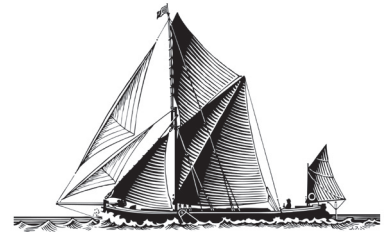
Brackets are stuck onto the front of the teeth and joined together by a flexible wire. Another popular type of brace is the 'functional appliance' which is often worn for 9-12 months and then followed by a short course of fixed appliances. Functional appliances are removable but are worn full time and use the power of the jaw muscles to make significant changes to the way the upper and lower teeth meet.

Treatment sometimes involves the removal of one or more adult teeth to make enough space to straighten the teeth; extractions are normally carried out by your routine dentist.

Once you are sure that you want to go ahead, then an appointment can be made to start treatment. Most braces need adjusting every 5-6 weeks. Treatment time depends on how severe the initial problem was and may take anywhere from a few months to two and a half years. Most treatments are completed in about 18-24 months.

It takes a couple of weeks to get used to a brace and initially it may cause some discomfort to the teeth and soft tissues. Teeth are usually uncomfortable after adjustments to the brace but this normally settles within a few days.

When treatment is finished, the teeth need to be held in position with appliances called retainers while the surrounding bone settles. Retainers can be removable or fixed, depending on the original position of the teeth.



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- Success of orthodontic treatment depends on a partnership between the skills of the dentist and the enthusiasm and commitment of the patient
- The teeth and appliances need to be cleaned very thoroughly every day to ensure that the teeth are not damaged during a long course of treatment
- The duration of retention required following orthodontic treatment varies from person to person. However, the only way to permanently guarantee stability of tooth position is to retain indefinitely