



Orthodontic treatment

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Full orthodontic treatment is started once most or all of the permanent teeth have erupted. The optimal time to start is based upon the specific malocclusion and not on the chronological age. It is often highly beneficial to start treatment prior to the loss of all of the baby teeth. Most cases will require full braces on the top and bottom teeth. Sometimes other appliances are used to help with treatment. Invisalign can be used on adults but not on anyone who is still growing.

The first step for orthodontic treatment is to obtain diagnostic records, which includes models of the teeth, photographs, radiographs, and a clinical exam. This will allow Dr. Hertzberg to determine a treatment plan that is unique to each case. He will then present the records and explain exactly what needs to be done to correct the problem and what will happen during treatment. At this time estimated time of treatment and fees will be explained. After this is presented to you, the braces can be placed. This is usually the longest appointment and can last up to two hours. Sometimes braces need to be placed over multiple appointments due to a variety of reasons including baby teeth still present, abnormal contacts between upper and lower teeth or other interferences. The regular check up appointments will only require around 15-30 minutes. These appointments are spaced between 3 and 8 weeks, depending on the type of treatment. Treatment time can range from less than a year to over three years, depending on the problem.

The braces consist of several different parts. Bands are rings that fit around specific teeth (usually the molars). If these are needed, separators are placed between the teeth first. These separators create a space between the teeth so that the bands will fit properly. Brackets are the braces that are "glued" directly to the teeth. These can be placed on the molars, but sometimes they will not stick so bands will be used instead.

The brackets are the most fragile part of “braces”, and great care needs to be taken not to break them. “Clear” braces are available for the upper front teeth. Wires are tied to the brackets and this is what actually moves the teeth. Different strengths of wires may be used depending on the goals of treatment. The “colors” of the braces that you see are the ties that hold the wires to the brackets, and these can be changed at each visit.

While in treatment it is very important to visit the dentist regularly to ensure no damage occurs to the teeth. Sometimes it becomes necessary to increase the frequency of cleanings, especially with adults. Poor oral hygiene during orthodontic treatment can lead to permanent damage of the teeth.

Financial aspects of treatment

Fees are based on the difficulty and duration of each case. Generally, 25-35% is put down to cover the cost of the records and appliances and the rest is financed monthly for the duration of treatment. All aspects of orthodontic care are included in the fee, with the exception of lost or broken retainers, excessive breakage of appliances (after the 5th incident), and “clear” braces, which are \$250 extra due to the extremely high cost of the brackets. Insurance typically covers a certain lifetime maximum benefit for orthodontics and is separate from regular dental insurance. The amount of the insurance benefit is factored into the down and monthly payments.