

A Patient's Guide To Confidently Choosing An Orthodontist



Inside, you'll discover the...

- 8 Misconceptions about orthodontic care
- 3 Mistakes to avoid when choosing an orthodontist
- 6 Questions to ask before you accept orthodontic care
- Commonly asked questions about braces
- 5 Things your orthodontist wants you to know about braces

What To Expect,
What to Avoid,
and How To Assure
Your Satisfaction



Patient Guide To Confidently Choosing An Orthodontist

Choosing an orthodontist isn't easy...

Your smile is the first thing people notice about you. It affects your confidence and self esteem, and can have a significant impact on your social and career success.

That's why choosing the right orthodontist is so important.

Unfortunately, finding an orthodontist that's right for you isn't easy. Even in our modern world of instant information, many patients find that determining which orthodontist they should see is a stressful process.

Many patients report feeling like they could make a more informed decision about choosing an orthodontist if they only knew more about what questions they should be asking during the selection process.

Some patients report being frustrated with the limited information they get from the orthodontists they speak with because everyone says essentially the same thing. That makes it hard to decide on a specialist they can trust.

Many patients feel afraid they will make the wrong decision about their orthodontic treatment and will have to live with less than desirable results.

Does any of this sound familiar? If so, you can rest assured you're not alone.

In fact, it's a problem even smart people just like you go through every day when trying to decide on orthodontic care for either their kids or themselves.

To help you reach a more informed decision about which orthodontist is right for you, we've put together our best insights and recommendations into this consumer awareness guide. It will help you find an experienced, cutting edge orthodontist who will take care of your smile and keep you smiling for years to come.

The Difference Between An Orthodontist And A General Dentist

An orthodontist is a dentist who has completed a 2-3 year postgraduate residency program where they have been trained as an orthodontic specialist.

A general dentist is licensed to perform all types of dentistry, but mostly their expertise is in restorative dentistry like crowns, bridges, fillings, cleanings and implants.

Although general dentists may do some basic orthodontics work such as Invisalign™ braces, they have not received any formal postgraduate training other than a weekend course or several weekend seminars.

Because an orthodontic specialist focuses only on braces, they have the most experience and are the most qualified to consistently and efficiently deliver exceptional orthodontic treatment results.



8 Misconceptions About Orthodontic Care You Need To Be Aware Of

MISCONCEPTION #1: Only children need orthodontic care

Orthodontics is not just for children anymore. Data from the American Association of Orthodontists shows that approximately 20% of all Orthodontics performed in the United States is on adult patients. Treatment options range from full comprehensive treatment to the less noticeable, cosmetically attractive “invisible” braces or Invisalign removable retainers.

Because of how a healthy, attractive smile can enhance one’s career and social life, many adults report wishing they had pursued orthodontic treatment sooner.



MISCONCEPTION #2: All Practitioners Are Basically the Same

While it would be nice if this were true, the simple fact is that this is not the case. All professionals, regardless of their specialty, have different backgrounds and levels of talent.

When it comes to dentistry and orthodontics, a great practitioner not only needs to have an excellent education to diagnose and develop an appropriate treatment plan, they also have to have a passion for keeping up with current technologies and possess the talent to deliver the results that you or your child require.

An orthodontist is a dental specialist who focuses their practice specifically on the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of dental and facial irregularities. In other words, an orthodontist specializes in straightening teeth and aligning jaws.

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After attending dental school, an orthodontist will have attended 2 or more years of additional full-time accredited orthodontic training. Selecting an orthodontist who is a member of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) is your assurance that you have chosen an orthodontic specialist.

MISCONCEPTION #3: Teeth Will Stay Straight Once Braces Are Removed

There are 2 main factors in orthodontic care: 1.) Getting your teeth straight and your bite right and; 2.) Keeping your teeth straight after your braces are removed.

With proper planning, treatment, and consistent retainer wear, maintaining your new smile after orthodontic treatment can be very predictable. Unfortunately, nothing stays the same in the human body and this is especially true of teeth that have been moved into a new position.

Because teeth are connected to the bone by tissue that can be stretched and compressed, there is a tendency for these tissues to “reposition” your teeth once your braces are removed. Consequently, this repositioning of your teeth could result in unwanted changes.

To counteract this unwanted teeth movement, an orthodontist will always recommend consistent retainer wear to keep your teeth straight. That’s why retainers are required when braces are removed to keep your teeth straight.

MISCONCEPTION #4: Wisdom Teeth Are Responsible For Crooked Teeth And Need To Be Removed

While you may have read or been told that your wisdom teeth cause teeth crowding, there is little evidence to support this claim. In fact, it is well documented that crowding can take place in people who either never developed wisdom teeth or have had their wisdom teeth extracted.

Wisdom teeth (also called third molars) are no longer seen as a cause for orthodontic crowding. At most, they are seen as a possible factor. There are, however, plenty of acceptable reasons for removal of wisdom teeth: Possible infections, periodontal problems, decay and in rare cases dental tumors.

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If you have any questions regarding third molars and their role with crowded teeth please do not hesitate to discuss this with your orthodontist or oral surgeon.

MISCONCEPTION #5: Braces Need To Feel Tight In Order To Work

This misconception is so old school! Modern orthodontic systems and techniques have eliminated the need to “tighten” braces at each appointment. In fact, it has been scientifically demonstrated that tooth movement is more biologically sound with light, consistent force.

Heavy, tight forces have been shown to be bad for the bone that supports the teeth and, in some cases move the teeth the wrong way, which would require longer treatment times. “No pain, no gain” treatment techniques, therefore, should be avoided.

Today’s orthodontic alignment systems are not your Mother’s braces and should not be thought of this way. Clear aligners, patient specific orthodontic systems, self-ligating brackets and state of the art wire technologies can enable you to achieve a beautiful smile with less pain, a greater convenience, and in a shorter amount of time than was possible just a few short years ago.

MISCONCEPTION #6: Gaps Between Teeth Will Close Using Braces

Many people are often disappointed when the gaps between their teeth don’t close as soon as they get braces. In fact, these gaps may initially increase, which may cause further concern or disappointment.

However, just like crowded teeth can be corrected with the use of orthodontic appliances, gaps or spaces between your teeth can be predictably closed as well, but it may not be until the teeth are totally aligned before you see a change in the spaces between your teeth.

MISCONCEPTION #7: Braces Need To Be Worn For 2 Years

While there are cases that do require two or more years of treatment, many patients are enjoying significantly shorter treatment times due to the many technological advances available in orthodontic care.

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Each patient's orthodontic needs require different types of treatment which will, therefore, require different lengths of treatment time.

Based on their experience and expertise, an orthodontist can typically predict the amount of time required to complete a course of treatment. However, keep in mind there are many factors that can slow down treatment. These include: bone density, keeping appointments, broken appliances, or poor compliance with self-care instructions.

MISCONCEPTION #8: Orthodontists over treat by starting braces on 7 year old children when they still have some baby teeth.

False. Starting braces on children at around age 7 - 8 is perfectly acceptable as long as the child has a clearly defined orthodontic problem. Examples include: Moderate to severe crowding, posterior or anterior cross-bite, problems with the eruption of permanent teeth, social concerns, thumb sucking and severe over jet which increases the risk of fracture.

If you have concerns about your child's dental development, never hesitate to contact your trusted orthodontist for a complementary consultation.

3 Mistakes To Avoid When Choosing An Orthodontist

Mistake #1: Choosing an orthodontist based solely on price.

Shopping for the best price is something we all do everyday. All things being equal, given the choice between two commodity items, it's usually more financially prudent to choose the item that's less expensive.

A good example of this is the difference in price of a store brand medication and a name brand medication. If the ingredients and volume are exactly the same, and the store brand is a few dollars cheaper, most people will purchase the store brand over the name brand and save a few bucks. You probably do this all the time.



Unfortunately, many consumers see orthodontic care as a commodity, mistakenly believing that “braces are braces.” While on the surface this belief may seem true, fact is braces are not items you should compare based solely on price. There are, actually, many factors that should go into your decision.

Although one orthodontist's prices may be significantly less than another orthodontist down the street selling the exact same braces, major differences in the advantages and accumulated value of the two services may be considerably different.

Great value encompasses far more than price. State of the art technology, uncompromising quality, exceptional outcomes, and a patient experience second to none are but a few considerations that need to be factored into your decision.

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With you or your child's happiness, self-esteem, and confidence on the line, it's more important to get the right braces for your particular condition. And, that means being carefully evaluated and presented with all the facts, benefits, and recommendations relative to your unique case. Only then can you make an informed decision

Mistake #2: Relying on your family dentist for orthodontic treatment.

Although your family dentist may have had some additional weekend training with Invisalign™ braces, they typically see only a handful of these cases a year.

An orthodontist, on the other hand, has 2-3 years of specialized training beyond dental school and only practices orthodontics, where they may treat hundreds of patients a year.

The value in seeing an orthodontist for treatment is that the orthodontist is an expert, highly experienced, and understands form, function and a wonderful smile.

Mistake #3: Not doing your homework

Just because your family dentist may have referred you to a particular orthodontist, it's up to you to decide if the orthodontist is right for you.

First of all, a referral from your family dentist is not required to see an orthodontist - you're free to choose an orthodontist you're most comfortable with.

A good orthodontist will take the time to listen to your questions and answer them without making you feel pressured or rushed. In addition, the office staff should be friendly and helpful and the environment clean. Finally, it would be a good idea to find out the experience of other current and past patients.

6 Questions To Ask Before Accepting Orthodontic Care

“Are you an orthodontic specialist?”

Ask if the doctor is a member of the American Association of Orthodontics or the American Board of Orthodontics. Only orthodontic specialists can be members of these organizations.

“Does the orthodontist have the latest technology in their office?”

An orthodontist who uses the latest diagnostic and treatment technology usually means the doctor is investing both time and money in keeping their skills up-to-date. More accurate diagnostics and modern treatment technology means faster and better treatment outcomes with much less discomfort.



“How long will the recommended orthodontic treatment take?”

The answer will depend on various factors, including: your specific diagnosis, type of braces used, care of appliances, and compliance with prescribed treatment regimen. Again, depending on your particular case, a range of 12 - 24 months is usually the norm.

“Are your fees all-inclusive, covering appliances, appointments, diagnostics, photos, retainers and follow ups?”

Most orthodontic offices offer a comprehensive fee that is all-inclusive.

“Do you offer interest free financing?”

Most orthodontic offices will offer several financing options including in house interest free financing as well as third party financing. Based upon you monthly budget, the orthodontic office will work with you so that your payments are affordable.

“Do you offer a lifetime guarantee?”

An orthodontist who is confident in their expertise should be more than willing to offer a lifetime guarantee. If the patient follows the prescribed retention program and the teeth become crooked again, the guarantee should stipulate the patient should be entitled to another round of orthodontic treatment free of charge.

Commonly Asked Questions About Braces

When is the best time to schedule a consultation with the orthodontist?

The American Association of Orthodontists recommends that all children see an orthodontist for an evaluation no later than age seven. There are a few orthodontic problems that should be corrected at that age. If your orthodontist determines that no treatment is necessary at that time, he or she will be able to offer you guidance on when to start treatment or when to bring your child back for re-evaluation. For adults, treatment can be started at almost any age as long as the gums and bone surrounding the teeth are healthy.

Do I need shots?

No shots are needed for orthodontic treatment. However, if your orthodontist refers you out for other procedures such as extractions, surgical exposure of teeth, or mini-screws, you may need a local anesthetic.

Are there foods I cannot eat while I have braces?

Yes. Stay away from hard foods (nuts, chips, hard candy, pizza crust), Sticky foods (caramel, taffy, gum), popcorn (due to the kernels), and whole fruits (such as biting into a whole apple). Avoid biting on ice. In addition, do not bite into meats with bones such as chicken or ribs. All of these precautions are to minimize risk of breaking your braces.

Do I need a referral from my dentist to see the orthodontist?

No. While dentists can refer patients to the orthodontist, many patients are actually referred to the orthodontist by family and friends of existing patients. Exceptions to this rule may be if you are in an HMO plan that will only allow you to see certain orthodontists.

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How often will I have orthodontic appointments?

Getting the braces on may take up to three appointments if special appliances are needed. Once the braces and needed appliances are on, orthodontic appointments are typically scheduled every 4-8 weeks, though there are certain times where more frequent monitoring is needed.

Can I get braces just on my top or bottom teeth?

That depends. Besides straightening your teeth, orthodontists are also concerned about correcting your bite if needed. Many times, if only one arch is treated, the bite will still be uncorrected. Over time, a malocclusion (bad bite) could cause damage to your teeth, tissues, and jaw joints.

What are elastics and what do they do?

Elastics are removable small rubber bands that are worn to move your teeth in ways braces alone cannot. Elastics are used most often to correct bite problems. If you need to wear elastics, your orthodontist will tell you how to put them on, and whether you have to wear them all the time or only at night. Make sure you wear the elastics as directed by your orthodontist or your treatment may not progress.

5 Things Your Orthodontist Wants You To Know About Braces

Conventional Metal Braces

These are the traditional braces that most patients wear. You will often see them with brightly colored ties that are decorations and are usually popular with kids under the age of 12.

PROS: Less expensive than most options.

CONS: Very visible.

Ceramic Braces

Ceramic braces operate much like conventional braces, but the unsightly metal brackets are replaced with clear or tooth-colored brackets. The band that attaches to the brackets is clear or white.

PROS: Appearance is subtle. Some people say they're more comfortable.

CONS: More costly. Monthly adjustments are needed. May take a little longer for desired results. May not be suitable for major adjustments.

Invisible Braces

Clear, plastic aligners straighten your teeth—invisibly. Fitted over your teeth, they slowly ease them into alignment. Every two weeks, you get a new set that adjusts the alignment a little further. Often called “Invisalign” braces because of the dominance of this brand.

PROS: Very difficult to see the braces. Perform faster than regular braces. Can be removed when you eat and brush your teeth so no dietary or hygiene changes are necessary. Great for athletes and are more comfortable than traditional braces. Fewer appointments and emergencies.



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CONS: The patient is required to be more responsible with wearing their retainers.

Lingual Braces

Wire braces are fitted on the back side of your teeth. They function much like conventional braces.

PROS: Can't be seen from the front of the mouth.

CONS: Can be more uncomfortable and harder to adjust to. May take longer for desired results. May be more expensive than many alternatives. Not for all orthodontic conditions.

Self-Ligating Braces

Metal braces with no ties are called "self-ligating," meaning that the wire is held in place with a small door on the actual braces. There are several "brand" names for these types of braces such as Damon, SPEED, 6-Month Smile, In-Ovation, Empower, and the Inman Aligner. These types of braces will usually speed up treatment time by 3 to 6 months.

PROS: They work fast. On average, treatment is completed in 16 months. Much less noticeable. Cost effective. More hygienic.

CONS: May be more expensive than traditional braces.

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Final thoughts...

If you are looking for the right orthodontist for you or your child, it may be difficult to know where to begin, what questions to ask, and who you can trust.

Our hope is that the information provided in this consumer guide was both informative and useful in helping you determine the most important considerations when looking for an orthodontist.

Modern orthodontic treatment requires less time, is more comfortable, involves far fewer appointments, and results in much less of an impact on today's busy, active families.

For more information on how to choose an orthodontist that's right for you, or to arrange a FREE Smile Audit. Call any of our offices:

**In Cincinnati and Kentucky:
(859) 441-7900**

**In Miamisburg:
(937) 866-2448**

In the meantime, we would like to wish you all good health and an Extraordinary Smile!



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Resources

The American Association of Orthodontics

www.braces.org

www.webmd.com Go to Healthy Living A-Z, select O, select Oral Health

Mouth Power Online - Oral Health Education Program

www.mouthpower.org

NOTES:



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