

# CHAPTER 1

## Why is My Child's Smile So Important?

If you are weighing the yes/no and now/later decisions of orthodontic care or braces, you'll be trying to decide just how important or unimportant it really is.

Some parents feel "looks aren't everything." Some think their kid should just be tough-minded about this and not overly sensitive. Some may not have had orthodontic care when they were children and think, *Hey, I turned out just fine. I have a great spouse, a good career, friends—so what's the big deal?*

But that was then. This is *now*: the age of social media.

Social shaming and bullying is a lot worse, a lot more common, and a lot more persistent than when you were a kid. Teen suicide is on the rise, and such suicides share one thing in common: shocked and bewildered parents who could not conceive of their child ending his own life. Sure, they might've noticed he was a *little* depressed. They knew he was being bullied and spending more time home, alone, not leaving his room, but geez, he *is* a teenager, after all. What once was a few days or weeks of misery contained in the cafeteria with a few bullies is now endless, expansive, and broadcast online to everybody. Behind a computer screen, it can get far nastier than most would dare in person. Sometimes, kids bully each other for no reason. Being a "buck-toothed" girl or a boy with gaps in between the teeth can sometimes be enough to exacerbate the situation.

### Signs Your Child May Be Being Bullied

- Decrease in self-esteem
- Not wanting to go to school
- Skipping school
- Injuries they can't explain
- Self-destructive behaviors (e.g., harming themselves)
- Declining school grades
- Sleep difficulties
- Loss of interest in schoolwork or activities
- Sudden loss of friends or avoiding social groups
- Changes in eating habits



A straight, clean and healthy smile can not only give your child the confidence needed to embrace true worth, but can also pave the way toward easier socialization at school, church, or during extracurricular activities. Do your child a favor and talk about their smile and how it might be affecting them.

Beyond that, there's a life ahead of your child. Going to middle school with crooked teeth and a smile that you're not proud of is one thing. Hey, plenty of kids are going to school *without shoes* for heaven's sake. But going to college admission interviews, packing up and heading off to college, going to job interviews, trying to fit into new and anxiety-rich environments at a faraway college or new workplace with a smile that you're not proud of is more serious.

This isn't *just* a cosmetic issue. Misaligned, crooked teeth can contribute to *significant* medical problems.

Poorly aligned teeth or a poor bite can contribute to chronic headaches and migraines, contribute to digestive problems because of the inability to properly chew foods, and make getting a decent night's sleep impossible. Maybe most dangerous of all, it can foster gum disease. Gum disease has absolute links to diabetes, heart disease, strokes and dementia, as well as, of course, the loss of natural teeth altogether. Orthodontic corrections can be done later in adult life but often they can be more difficult. We treat a large number of adult patients at Coastline Orthodontics, and most of them say they wish they would have had treatment earlier in life.

Mouth problems and misaligned teeth that are not corrected could cause problems with your gums and the bones that support your teeth. This could allow "pockets" for infections and periodontal disease to arise and turn into very difficult, painful and costly problems later in life.

In the teenage years, failure to spend even \$ 4,000 can easily create a \$40,000 full mouth restoration case at age forty or fifty or embarrassing, health-compromising removal of all teeth and use of dentures at age sixty.

Gum disease is serious business. It worsens the risks of and heightens dangers from diabetes, heart disease, strokes, and dementia. Ignoring teeth misalignment in pre-teen or teen years could lead to adult medical problems. If there is a genetic history of any of these medical problems, you only worsen the odds of your son or daughter suffering from them by ignoring or postponing needed orthodontic treatment.

Aside from impacting health, a poorly aligned smile can significantly impact your child's comfort. Headaches, toothaches, sinus problems, dry mouth, snoring, drooling, bad breath, and insomnia are potential symptoms of a smile that isn't straight, jaws that aren't aligned, or teeth that are too close together or not quite close enough. Oftentimes, however, the mouth is the last place we check for signs of discomfort, loss of sleep, or even a simple headache.

If your child's pediatrician can't figure out why they're not sleeping well or why they're experiencing headaches or even insomnia for which there seems to be no cause, a simple thirty-minute exam at your local orthodontist could provide a clear solution in no time!

This is what we hear from a lot of adult patients getting orthodontic treatment and braces:

***"I had wonderful parents, but they could not afford the braces I needed. I wish I had gotten the care I needed when I was a kid, so I didn't grow up to have this smile my whole life and have all these problems now."***

All parents want to do the right thing. They don't want to let their children down in any way. Parents just about kill themselves over their kids' college, trying their best to guide the decision, trekking around the country on campus visits, worrying over campus culture, or taking on *serious* debt. Every parent understands what many kids can't—that it's not about the few years of college but rather the forty or fifty years afterward.

The same thing applies here. An investment in orthodontic treatment now would provide immeasurable benefits over the years to come. Kids can't always appreciate that now, but you can.

No parent wants their child to suffer, either from teeth that actually hurt, headaches you can't explain, insomnia that affects their daily life, or insecurity your child may be feeling because of a crooked or oversized smile.

The fact is, your child's formative years are actually the most sensitive for his or her teeth. Now is the time to pay close attention to your child's smile, behavior, peer relationships, and confidence level.

If any or all are lacking, a qualified orthodontist may help give you and your child the peace of mind you both crave.

## The Top 5 Reasons People Avoid Seeing the Orthodontist



### **1. Patients are afraid it's going to hurt.**

Pain is the number-one reason most people avoid going to the orthodontist. However, modern technology—and choosing the right orthodontist—can ensure that your child enjoys his/her orthodontic experience with minimal discomfort.

### **2. Patients are afraid it's going to cost too much.**

Not only are most orthodontic procedures more affordable than ever, but insurance, payment plans and a variety of other financing options make this all but a moot point for most of our patients. Remember, orthodontists are here to make sure your child's teeth, smile, and jaw are aligned to make his or her life better—period! We're not going to let something like price get in the way of creating a better, safer, healthier smile for your child.

### **3. Patients are afraid it's going to take too long / miss too much school or work.**

Regardless of the type of orthodontic procedure your child needs, time is of the essence. Modern technology and ease of access allows us to work around your child's school schedule with minimal absences. After initial visits, and barring the actual procedure itself, most visits and/or adjustments are routine and can take anywhere from fifteen to forty-five minutes.

**4. Patients do not see the need to take action.** Eroding, crooked or unaligned smiles can take time to happen, but the time to act is now. Orthodontic irregularities don't just heal on their own or disappear if you ignore them. Your child's smile and overall dental health are too important to ignore out of questions of pain, convenience, or even price.

**5. Patients have been treated in the past with an attitude of indifference.** Let's face it, not all doctors are created equal. There is no room for indifference when it comes to your child's healthcare. Find an orthodontic specialist that offers not only state of the art technology for your child but state of the art service as well. Orthodontic specialists know what it's like to sit in the chair, and should provide every opportunity for patients, especially our younger patients, to feel comfortable, safe, and secure in our care.

Call us at 904.600.4749 or go to [www.coastlineorthodontics.com](http://www.coastlineorthodontics.com) to schedule your own Customized Smile Analysis.

