

Braces Basics: Delta Dental Answers Your Questions

Dental braces. For many of us, it's a rite of passage in childhood and adolescence. If you're a parent considering braces for your child, you may have questions about the treatment. Here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about braces.

Q: When should I take my child to get braces?

A: Orthodontic treatment often begins between ages 8 and 14, when a child's face and mouth are usually still growing, making the teeth and jaw easier to adjust. The best age for braces is specific to the individual, so talk to your child's orthodontist about the best plan of action.

Q: What are the most common reasons dentists recommend braces for children?

A: Sometimes crooked teeth or a misaligned jaw are genetic, while other times they develop from habits or accidents. There are 3 common reasons that dentists recommend braces for children:

1. *Crowding* – Crowding means that teeth aren't fitting properly in the jaw. When your teeth are crowded, it not only affects the look of your teeth but also may prevent teeth from being properly cleaned. Correcting the crowded teeth may improve the teeth's appearance and improve overall health by helping prevent cavities and gum disease, as those crowded teeth can often hide plaque and make that plaque hard to remove. And plaque is a major contributor to cavities.
2. *Spacing* – There may be extra spaces between teeth or there may be irregular spaces. Closing these gaps can give your teeth and mouth more pleasant appearance and not allow food and other items to get packed into those spaces.
3. *Bite* – Teeth may not align correctly when biting, and some of the issues are:
 - Overbite: when the lower teeth can hit the roof of the mouth, causing damage and pain
 - Underbite: may cause significant issues with chewing
 - Cross bite: may put uneven pressure on teeth
 - Open bite: when some of the teeth don't come together when biting

Q: How long does dental bracing treatment take?

A: This depends on the age of the patient and the severity of the problem. On average, an adolescent with mild to moderate dental issues can be treated with dental braces for 24 months, but this is totally patient dependent. Keep in mind that over and under-bites generally take longer to correct than straightening crooked teeth.

Q: What types of braces are available today?

A: Braces are categorized in two groups: braces and aligners.

1. *Braces* – There are traditional metal braces and newer ceramic braces. Both types are secured to the front of the teeth, and visible to others. Ceramic braces are less noticeable than metal

braces because they blend in better with the teeth.

2. *Aligners* – Aligners are invisible and removable, and typically replaced every two to four weeks. The drawback for kids with aligners is that because they can be removed, kids can choose not to wear them, and they often get lost. This means the movement of the teeth can be much slower and make treatment longer. This is also the most expensive option.

Q: How can parents help their kids have success with bracing?

A: If the child is using traditional braces, the child needs to be willing to be part of the treatment. The worst thing is to remove braces and see cavities underneath, which is a result of poor brushing and flossing. Ensuring your child follows the dentist’s instructions and supporting good home care are the keys to success for bracing.

Q: How much do braces cost?

A: The cost of straightening your child’s teeth depends on the method you choose and the length of the treatment plan. Metal or ceramic (tooth-colored) braces range from \$5,000 to \$8,000 before insurance.

With the State of Iowa’s employee dental benefit through Delta Dental of Iowa, there is an orthodontia benefit for children up to age 19 with a total lifetime benefit maximum of \$1,500. Below is an example of what you could expect to pay if you have a child who needs braces:

Total fee charged	\$6,000
Treatment length	24 months
Dental plan lifetime maximum benefit	\$1,500
Down payment (25% paid upon placement)	\$1,500 (\$6,000 x 25%)
Charges for monthly fee	\$4,500 (\$6,000 - \$1,500)
Monthly fee	\$187.50 (\$4,500/24 months)

NEW TREATMENT		
	Delta Dental of Iowa*	You
Down payment	\$750 (50% of down payment)	\$750
Monthly fee	\$93.75 (50% of \$187.50 monthly fee paid quarterly up to \$750*)	\$93.75 (50% of \$187.50 monthly fee until the plan maximum is met) \$187.50 (for remaining months of treatment)
Total amount paid	\$1,500	\$4,500
Plan lifetime ortho maximum remaining	\$0	N/A

*Benefit payments may meet plan maximum before treatment is complete.

Q: What are my next steps?

A: If you think your child might benefit from braces, schedule an appointment with your dentist to discuss your options.