

KEEPING A YOUTHFUL SMILE

ORTHODONTIC CARE FOR BEAUTY AND ANTI-AGING

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Have you ever thought about why we strive for perfection? Why do we look for beauty, balance and symmetry? I would assert that our strong need to seek out and achieve beauty is deeply rooted in our physiology and psychology. As a species, we are drawn to symmetry and balance. One aspect of facial beauty is the smile. If you look to the silver screen, actors have many different types of smiles. Almost all have straight, white teeth and a smile that exudes confidence.

The job of an orthodontist is to idealize the position of your teeth from an aesthetic standpoint and to idealize your occlusion, or “bite,” as much as possible. Orthodontics can greatly enhance the appearance of a smile, making it more balanced and aesthetically pleasing.

An orthodontist analyzes smiles in a few different planes of space — anterior-posterior (is the jaw too far forward or backward?), vertical (a very long face or really gummy smile), transverse (is the jaw too narrow?), and crowding of the teeth — while also evaluating how the upper and lower jaws relate to each other. Together, these aspects contribute to the balance or imbalance of the face and smile. Addressing the skeletal structure using braces or clear aligners, sometimes in conjunction with jaw surgery, orthodontists strive to achieve a beautiful smile.

In addition to producing a better-looking smile, one of the goals when straightening teeth is to idealize the occlusion or bite. Correcting the bite helps protect the teeth while functioning, specifically when chewing. Protecting teeth gives them greater longevity, slowing down the process of breakdown and tooth loss. This is often achieved in conjunction with the patient’s general dentist and other dental specialists. Sometimes patients need restorations, bone and gum procedures and night guards, as well.

The orthodontic placement of the front teeth and how these teeth relate to the lip and chin positions greatly influence the smile. When possible, the front teeth should follow the contour of the lower lip, which is known as the smile line.



Timing of treatment is also important, because most of the time form follows function. If a child has a narrow upper jaw, the lower jaw will find a comfortable place to close and will likely shift to one side. If this goes untreated, the jaw will grow asymmetrically and the chin may appear off center. This can only be treated surgically as an adult if untreated as a child.

Straightening your teeth can make you feel more beautiful. It gives harmony and balance to your face and many patients feel more confident after orthodontic treatment. The confidence alone is therapeutic and permeates through all facets of life. It’s like finally starting a workout regimen that you’ve been planning for months or eating just a little healthier — you get excited that you’re actually doing it. Early treatment can go a long way in counteracting the effects of aging on our mouth — and subsequently, our smile.

Smiling daily and often is most important regardless of your teeth. The act of smiling itself has a positive effect on the brain and mood. It lightens your day and someone else’s, too! ■