Your Complete Guide to Choosing an Orthodontist

...because when braces are needed, your informed decision will help you select a New Jersey Association Orthodontic Specialist.
What is Orthodontics?

Orthodontics is a special branch of dentistry that involves straightening teeth and altering bone growth for proper jaw alignment. It is also called “dento-facial orthopedics.”

For optimum chewing, your teeth should fit together like gears meshing in a machine. When your teeth and jaws do not meet correctly, it is called a “malocclusion,” or bad bite.

An orthodontist first diagnoses your tooth and jaw alignments, then may recommend to you special appliances to bring your teeth, lips and jaws into their proper positions. When your teeth and jaws are aligned through orthodontics, you will see improvement in your appearance, health, gums, and chewing power — even your speech and breathing may experience dramatic changes — all of which will enhance your self image and quality of life.

What's the Difference Between a General Dentist and an Orthodontist?

A higher level of intensive training.

An orthodontist is a dental specialist who has spent an additional two years or more in an advanced, intensive educational program to be certified in the science of facial growth and tooth movement from an accredited dental school. Graduation is not the end of education. New Jersey orthodontists advance their knowledge through continuing education courses which also satisfy the state law requirements.

In contrast to the general dentist, orthodontists limit their practice to the specialty of orthodontics in order to serve you better.
Added security.

Orthodontic treatment can change teeth and your face permanently, so it's important that you have a specialist provide orthodontic services for you and your family. Improper re-alignment can result in serious dental problems—even loss of teeth over time!

Your New Jersey Association Orthodontist has learned the special skills needed to guide tooth alignment and face development. You can feel confident that you are receiving the correct orthodontic treatment from a knowledgeable professional... treatment results that balance the harmony of your teeth, bones and face.

Special care comes from specialists.

The New Jersey Association of Orthodontists commends and appreciates the very fine general practitioners who recognize the benefits of orthodontic care and refer their patients with orthodontic needs to the specialist.

While a referral from your regular dentist is not necessary prior to your visit to a specialist, please be assured that the specialist and your regular dentist are a team and that their cooperation is in your best interest.

In fact, the American Dental Association has issued the following statement: The American Dental Association has recognized that Specialists are necessary to protect the public, nurture the art and science of dentistry and improve the quality of care. Specialists are recognized in those areas where advanced knowledge and skills are essential to maintain or restore oral health. The American Dental Association has further stated that a specialty (such as Orthodontics) must be a distinct and well defined field which requires unique knowledge and skills beyond those commonly possessed by general practitioners.*

*Requirements of Recognition of Dental Specialists and National Certifying Boards for Dental Specialists. Approved by the 1995 American Dental Association House of Delegates - October 1995
**How Can Orthodontics Help?**

**An attractive smile and improved self-esteem.**

Self-confidence is projected through your smile, so the significance of an attractive smile cannot be overstated. Like many others, you might find your self-esteem increasing as orthodontic treatment progresses. You'll feel more confident, more at ease with yourself as your teeth, lips and face are brought into harmony. It's not unusual for orthodontic treatment to lead to an improved attitude toward life as well as increased social and career successes.

**Longer-lasting teeth.**

Well-aligned teeth are easier to keep clean, since they won't trap as many food particles that lead to tooth decay. Your teeth also won't wear down as easily. Since orthodontics reduces stress on supporting bone and gum tissue, there's less chance you'll lose teeth to gum disease and bone decay.

**Better chewing power.**

Properly aligned teeth and jaws help you chew your food thoroughly. That means you can digest your food better... helping you improve your overall health.

**Breathing easier.**

When orthodontic treatment helps the face develop properly, airways may open for easier breathing. Many people have also experienced dramatic speech improvement.

**A clearer head.**

Orthodontics may play a helpful role in the treatment of headaches and face or neck pain.
When Should Orthodontic Treatment Begin?

Each case is different, so there is no one answer. However, untreated orthodontic problems can get much worse.

Get an early evaluation by age seven.

Every child should have an evaluation by age seven to predict the need and timing for treatment. Some orthodontic problems may be very difficult to correct if the face and jaws have finished growing, since treatment may include influencing the growth of jaws and muscles.

See a New Jersey Association Orthodontist early in your child’s life. Early treatment makes later corrections much easier, and less expensive. Your orthodontist can give you a timeline for your particular treatment.

Adults can also be treated.

It’s not too late as an adult to correct dental/facial problems; in fact, over 25% of all orthodontic treatment is for adults. Because an adult’s facial bones are finished growing, some corrections may require more than braces alone. You can change your appearance dramatically with orthodontic treatment accompanied by surgical intervention, if you wish.

What About the Cost of Treatment?

The assurance of complete treatment.

An orthodontist normally provides treatment for a set fee. We highly recommend the traditional fee-for-service; however, if you discuss your treatment with an HMO or managed care provider, you should ask about any limitations that may be imposed by your insurance coverage.
If you are uncomfortable with the professional your insurance program has sent you to, do not hesitate to get another evaluation.

**Discuss fees with your orthodontist.**

Costs vary depending on what treatment you need. Remember, because the time requirements will vary from one patient to another, the best program will include successful, complete treatment whenever possible.

Always examine very closely a plan that claims to give you something better for less.

**Financing.**

Several financing options are available. Most commonly, installments may be arranged with your orthodontist. Many employer-provided health care plans include orthodontic coverage which may assist in paying a portion of the treatment. Third party arrangements through a bank or a finance company may be used. Also, many orthodontists accept credit cards.

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**How can I find a good orthodontist?**

Members of the New Jersey Association of Orthodontists have to meet exacting standards of education and experience. They also keep current by attending meetings on the latest orthodontic techniques, appraising each other, and reviewing the newest information.

When your insurance company determines who will provide your treatment (as in an HMO or managed care program), it is in your best interest to select an orthodontist holding a New Jersey Specialty Permit Number in orthodontics from your insurer's list of dental providers. It is important to remember, orthodontic treatment is meant to last and should be determined by you and your freely chosen orthodontist.

By selecting from the membership of over 300 participating New Jersey Association Orthodontists, you'll receive state of the art, individualized care.
THE BEST ORTHODONTIC CARE IS A PHONE CALL, COMPUTER CLICK AWAY...

Thank you for reviewing this material that we have prepared for you. We hope it has been helpful.

The members of the New Jersey Association of Orthodontists have supported this public service effort to help you make an informed decision when selecting a specialist for orthodontic treatment.

For a complete list of New Jersey orthodontic specialists, call toll free 1-888-64-BRACES or log on to www.njbraces.org