



## Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,  
Woodstock's Orthodontic Specialist

**Q:** My regular dentist told me he can treat my child for orthodontics. Can he really do that?

**A:** By law, a licensed general dental practitioner can do any aspect of dentistry he/she is comfortable performing. However, unless they have had 2-3 years of additional specialty training at an accredited university for orthodontics, and, in Illinois, are licensed as a specialist after passing a separate specialty board examination, they are not allowed to advertise themselves or make claims that they are “an orthodontist”. They may perform orthodontics, but cannot legally or ethically infer that their qualifications are equal to a specialist. The wording walks a fine line, and they should gladly welcome your questions about their training and licensure.

The field of Orthodontics has many difficult diagnostic problems, and often treatment can get out of control due to missed diagnosis, strong growth patterns, and oral habits. A specialist is more likely to intercept these problems and manage them efficiently because of repeated experience with them, in addition to their university training.

The decision to choose a Specialist in Orthodontics over your general dentist is ultimately yours, based on your comfort level with your dentist's skill in this area. Similar is your likely preference of a surgeon vs. your family practice MD to remove your appendix. Both are doctors, both may be able do the procedure, but only one has additional board certified training.

Dr. Christensen's column appears weekly in the Northwest Herald. Questions to be answered and treatment inquiries may be directed to: **Woodstock Orthodontics, c/o Kirk H. Christensen, DDS, 226 West Judd Street, Woodstock, IL 60098, Phone: 815-337-5522**