



Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,
Woodstock's Orthodontic Specialist

Q: My general dentist said he could do my orthodontic treatment, and save me some money compared to a specialist. He took some x-rays and tooth impressions a month ago. When I phoned to ask when treatment could begin, his staff told me that the materials were not back from California yet. What does that mean?

A: Chances are that the staff gave you some information that was not intended for your ears. Many general dental practitioners do not possess the educational background or experience necessary to diagnose or treat an orthodontic case and depend on an outside source to tell them how to proceed. I am aware of a number of general dentists who take the diagnostic records in their office, or have that information collected at a medical laboratory. Those records are sent to a company that employs orthodontists, or other general dentists to diagnose the problems, create a treatment plan, and essentially “cook book” a recipe for treating the orthodontic case. It is likely that this type of information concerning your treatment has not yet been sent to your dentist. When I first heard of this, it reminded me of working on my car and having to bike over to the auto parts store to look up where my water pump is located using the Chiltons manual. You may want to discuss with your dentist what your records were doing in California. Another question you might ask is, what happens when a problem occurs that cannot be managed by your dentist, since the source of any answers seems to come from out of state. The response you get to those questions may influence your decision about who you want to have straighten your teeth. Let me stress, once again, that orthodontic specialists are highly trained to diagnose cases based on the records taken. They do not need an outside company to do this for them. Orthodontic specialists are also prepared to tackle difficulties that may arise during treatment based on their training and day-in/ day-out experience. 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**