



Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,
Woodstock's Orthodontic Specialist

Q: *What is a good starting age for my child to be seen for orthodontics, and is someone ever too old for orthodontic treatment?*

A: The American Association of Orthodontists recommends that children be seen by an orthodontic specialist around age 7. This is the time when most of the permanent incisor teeth are erupting. This period of dental and skeletal development is often an indicator of jaw excesses and/or deficiencies. Dental crowding can be evaluated, as well as crossbites. Development of extra teeth, or non-development of other future permanent teeth can be detected with a panoramic (around the head) radiograph at this age.

!Although treatment is usually not started at age 7 or 8, it is a good point in time to get a benchmark of where growth and dental development are heading. Observation recall appointments every 8-12 months help us monitor the direction of growth and dental development from that point. These observation visits are complimentary at Woodstock Orthodontics.

!Sometimes two phases of treatment are necessary, rather than one comprehensive treatment. I have heard about patients in some offices finding this confusing. If the treatment courses and goals are well defined by the orthodontist at a pretreatment consultation (after the exam and diagnostic records) both verbally and in writing, I have found that families are then very clear about the road ahead. The goals of Phase I, Phase II and comprehensive single phase treatments will be addressed in a future column.

!Orthodontic treatment can be performed on adults of unlimited age, provided they are in adequate health, and have sound teeth, supporting bone and gum tissues. It may not be too late for the smile you've always wanted. I just completed some successful orthodontic alignment on my mother who is a very healthy 73. Remember, however, that tooth movement is slower in adults, and that ideal treatment results are sometimes limited because jaw growth is no longer occurring and/or teeth have been previously lost or compromised.

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**