The American Association of Orthodontists recommends all children get a check-up with an orthodontic specialist no later than age 7.

Here’s Why:

• Orthodontists can spot subtle problems with jaw growth and emerging teeth while some baby teeth are still present.

• While your child’s teeth may appear to be straight, there could be a problem that only an orthodontist can detect.

• A check-up may reveal that your child’s bite is fine. Or, the orthodontist may identify a developing problem but recommend monitoring the child’s growth and development, and then, if indicated, begin treatment at the appropriate time for the child. In other cases, the orthodontist might find a problem that can benefit from early treatment.

• Early treatment may prevent or intercept more serious problems from developing and may make treatment at a later age shorter and less complicated. In some cases, the orthodontist will be able to achieve results that may not be possible once the face and jaws have finished growing.

• Early treatment may give your orthodontist the chance to:
  Guide jaw growth
  Lower the risk of trauma to protruded front teeth
  Correct harmful oral habits
  Improve appearance
  Guide permanent teeth into a more favorable position
  Create a more pleasing arrangement of teeth, lips and face

• Through an early orthodontic evaluation, you’ll be giving your child the best opportunity for a healthy, beautiful smile.

*If your child is older than 7, it’s certainly not too late for a check-up.*

*Because patients differ in both physiological development and treatment needs, the orthodontist’s goal is to provide each patient with the most appropriate treatment at the most appropriate time.*
Problems to Watch for in Growing Children

Malocclusions (“bad bites”) like those illustrated below, may benefit from early diagnosis and referral to an orthodontic specialist for a full evaluation.

- Crossbite of Front Teeth
  Top teeth are behind bottom teeth

- Crossbite of Back Teeth
  Top teeth are to the inside of bottom teeth

- Crowding

- Open Bite
  Front teeth do not meet when back teeth are closed

- Protrusion

- Deep Bite

- Underbite
  The lower teeth sit in front of upper teeth when back teeth are closed

- Spacing

- Oral Habits
  Sucking on thumb, fingers

In addition, if you notice any of the following in your child, check with your orthodontist:

- early or late loss of baby teeth
- difficulty in chewing or biting
- mouth breathing
- jaws that shift or make sounds
- speech difficulties
- biting the cheek or the roof of the mouth
- facial imbalance
- grinding or clenching of the teeth

Final treatment decisions should be made among the parent, child’s dentist and orthodontist.

Visit the American Association of Orthodontists website at mylifemysmile.org