Preparing Your Child for Braces: Four Tips | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/bracing-child-braces/

Details:

Getting braces can feel like a big step for a child or teenager, especially at an age when appearance and friendships already matter a lot. At Core Dental we suggest four practical steps: plan around the foods that get caught in braces, reassure your child that braces are common, talk openly about why treatment is worthwhile, and teach them simple ways to deal with worries at school. Your orthodontic team will explain the plan for your child.

Why can the teen and tween years feel hard for braces?

The tween and teen years bring changes in the body, friendships and how young people see themselves. Because self-esteem and appearance are closely linked at this age, the thought of wearing braces can feel daunting to some children. Listening to your child's specific worries is a helpful first step, and our team is happy to answer questions at the consultation.

Tip 1: How can you manage food with braces?

Some snacks leave small pieces behind in braces. Crunchy, salty snacks such as corn chips and cheese twists are common examples. A simple rule that many families find workable is to make these foods "safe for home, not for school", so your child can avoid the embarrassment of food stuck in their braces during the school day. Your orthodontic team will also give you a list of foods to avoid or take care with for your child's type of appliance.

Tip 2: How can you reassure your child that braces are common?

Many people have worn braces. Talking about family members or friends who have had them can help a child feel less alone. It can also give them something light-hearted to share with friends. At Core Dental we suggest keeping the conversation positive and giving your child the chance to ask us their own questions.

Tip 3: How do you talk about why braces are worthwhile?

Children are more likely to cooperate when they understand the reason for treatment. Explain that braces are a stage of care for their teeth and smile, and that wearing them as directed and attending appointments helps the process. Cost is a family decision, and our team will give you a written quote before treatment starts. We also offer interest-free payment plans to help spread the cost, and fees and payment terms should be confirmed with your practice.

Tip 4: How can you help your child feel ready for school with braces?

If your child has particular points of anxiety, work out a plan together for those moments. One simple idea is to pack a toothbrush in their school bag. If a bit of lunch gets stuck, they can quietly clean their teeth in the bathroom at a quiet moment. Practical tools like this help children feel in control.

When should a child have an orthodontic assessment?

Our group guidance is that an assessment can be arranged from around age 9 to 10, and your dentist can refer you to one of our specialist orthodontists if needed. The right timing varies with each child, and not every child needs braces. See our pages on children's braces and Invisalign , traditional orthodontic braces and internal lingual braces to learn about the options that may be discussed.

The signs that say "get this looked at", and the window they belong to

Most parents wait to be told. The published guidance gives a list of things that should prompt an orthodontic assessment, and several of them are not about how the teeth look.

Orthodontics Australia, the information service of the Australian Society of Orthodontists, lists signs suggesting a visit:

"Losing baby teeth prematurely due to cavities (decay) or trauma"

"Snoring or consistent mouth-breathing"

"Teeth that don't meet properly when your child bites together"

"Protruding and/or overcrowded teeth"

"Difficulties with biting or chewing"

"Thumb sucking"

"A family history of impacted or missing teeth"

Snoring and mouth-breathing are on that list , and they rarely get mentioned to a dentist at all. So is a family history of impacted or missing teeth, which is something a parent knows and a clinician cannot guess.

The recommended window. "We recommend children visit a registered specialist orthodontist for an assessment between the ages of 7-10 years old. This allows the orthodontist to evaluate your child's teeth to determine if they may be a candidate for early treatment."

Its reason is about what is visible at that stage: "at this early stage in your child's life they'll have a mix of adult and baby teeth. This can help the orthodontist determine if there are any developing problems such as misalignment of the jaws, crowding, or overbites."

And it is an evaluation, not a commitment. "Every child can benefit from an early orthodontic evaluation." The outcome is often to wait: "The orthodontist may recommend a course of treatment to begin one to five years after the initial evaluation, but in other cases there may be early measures the orthodontist can take to intercept developing problems, such as space maintainers or palatal expanders."

Why the window exists at all. "Early orthodontic treatment begins while your child's jawbones are still soft. They do not harden until children reach their late teens." The Victorian Department of Health describes the same constraint from the appliance side: palatal expanders "can widen the upper jaw" and functional appliances are "used to correct bite problems", and both "are used in children when their jaw bones are still growing".

Some problems are therefore easier to address at twelve than at twenty — not because treatment is better earlier in general, but because the jaw is still moving.

There is still no single right moment. "There's no one 'best' age to start orthodontic treatment

it varies from child to child and depends on the issue that's being treated." And the Department: "Some orthodontic treatment must wait until the permanent teeth have finished erupting. Some treatments can start earlier, to avoid major treatment later."

Sources: Orthodontics Australia (Australian Society of Orthodontists), When to see an Orthodontist, orthodonticsaustralia.org.au ; Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Orthodontic treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 15 December 2025). Both accessed 6 November 2026.

What braces ask of a teenager, in practical terms

The hard part of braces for a young person is daily rather than clinical. The published risk list is a fair description of what they are actually signing up for, and it is better to say it plainly.

Cleaning gets harder and matters more. The Department: "Braces, aligners and retainers make cleaning the teeth more difficult. This increases the chance of gum disease, tooth decay, and stains." Its standard during treatment is "cleaned thoroughly at least two times a day, ideally after every meal", with "a fluoride toothpaste to help protect teeth from tooth decay".

It also names the tools: "There are special toothbrushes that can make cleaning around braces easier", and "interdental brushes ... fit into small spaces around brackets, wires and between teeth. They can be particularly helpful during orthodontic treatment."

Stains are on that risk list, which is worth mentioning to a teenager who agreed to braces for how their teeth will look.

Things will poke, and there is a standard fix. "Soft tissue injury - Braces (brackets and wires) can be sharp and poke the gums, cheeks, lips or tongue. Sharp areas can be covered by special orthodontic wax to prevent injury."

Knowing the wax exists before the first sore spot turns a crisis into an errand.

The food rules, split by what they protect. "Avoid sticky or hard foods during orthodontic treatment. These include chewing gum, lollies and crusty bread. These foods can get stuck on braces, aligners and retainers and cause damage." And separately: "Avoid high sugar foods and drinks, including fruit juice. These can lead to tooth decay." The Department also asks you to "limit snacking and sugar-sweetened food and drinks during orthodontic treatment".

Sport is worth raising before the season, not after. Orthodontics Australia notes that "protrusive upper front teeth can make your child prone to injury - particularly while playing sports - and may prevent good oral hygiene", and the Department lists among the problems of misalignment that "front teeth that stick out or are not in line with other teeth, are more likely to be injured during sports or in a fall".

On protection generally, the Australian Dental Association's policy on mouthguards and oral injury is the relevant source, and what a child in braces should wear for contact sport is a question for the treating practitioner rather than something to generalise from a web page.

And the end of treatment is not the end. "Relapse - Teeth can move once braces are taken off. Retainers should be worn to prevent this from happening." That is the conversation to have with a teenager early, because the retainer years arrive exactly when everyone has stopped thinking about it.

Finally, the reassurance that is actually true. The Department's baseline is that "not many people have perfectly straight teeth" and "not all crooked teeth require treatment" — so a child in braces is being treated for a reason that was assessed, and a child not in braces is not missing out. Where treatment is needed, the Department's own list of why includes difficulty keeping teeth clean, "wear and tear" from uneven biting, injury risk, and self-confidence.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Orthodontic treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 15 December 2025); Orthodontics Australia (Australian Society of Orthodontists), When to see an Orthodontist, orthodonticsaustralia.org.au ; Australian Dental

Association, Policy Statement 2.2.5 - Prevention and Management of Oral Injuries, ada.org.au . All accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

What can I do to help my child get ready for braces?

Talk through what to expect, listen to their worries, plan food choices, and pack a toothbrush for school. Our team can also answer your child's questions at the consultation so they know what will happen.

Which foods are hard on braces?

Sticky, hard and crunchy foods can damage braces or leave pieces trapped in them. Your orthodontic team will give you a list for your child's appliance. Many families keep messy snacks for home rather than school.

How do I help my child with worries about how braces look?

Acknowledge their feelings, point out that many people wear braces, and focus on the long-term benefit for their smile. Practical plans, such as a toothbrush at school, can also help them feel more confident.

At what age can my child see an orthodontist?

At Core Dental an orthodontic assessment can be arranged from around age 9 to 10, when your dentist recommends it. Some children are monitored for a time, while others start treatment earlier or later.

How do I book a children's braces consultation at Core Dental?

Call 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au. Tell our team that you would like an orthodontic assessment for your child, and we will arrange a time at a practice near you.

What signs mean my child should be assessed?

Orthodontics Australia lists: "Losing baby teeth prematurely due to cavities (decay) or trauma"; "Snoring or consistent mouth-breathing"; "Teeth that don't meet properly when your child bites together"; "Protruding and/or overcrowded teeth"; "Difficulties with biting or chewing"; "Thumb sucking"; and "A family history of impacted or missing teeth".

At what age should the first orthodontic assessment be?

"We recommend children visit a registered specialist orthodontist for an assessment between the ages of 7-10 years old." At that stage a child has "a mix of adult and baby teeth", which helps identify "any developing problems such as misalignment of the jaws, crowding, or overbites".

Will an assessment lead straight to braces?

Often not. "The orthodontist may recommend a course of treatment to begin one to five years after the initial evaluation, but in other cases there may be early measures the orthodontist can take to intercept developing problems, such as space maintainers or palatal expanders."

Why does treating some problems early matter?

Because the jaw is still moving. "Early orthodontic treatment begins while your child's jawbones are still soft. They do not harden until children reach their late teens." The Victorian Department of Health notes that palatal expanders and functional appliances "are used in children when their jaw bones are still growing".

Which foods are hardest on braces?

"Avoid sticky or hard foods during orthodontic treatment. These include chewing gum, lollies and crusty bread. These foods can get stuck on braces, aligners and retainers and cause damage." Separately, "avoid high sugar foods and drinks, including fruit juice".

How much cleaning do braces need?

More than usual. The Department asks for teeth "cleaned thoroughly at least two times a day, ideally after every meal", with fluoride toothpaste. It notes "there are special toothbrushes that can make cleaning around braces easier", and that interdental brushes "can be particularly helpful during orthodontic treatment".

Will braces stain my child's teeth?

Stains are on the Department's own risk list: braces, aligners and retainers "make cleaning the teeth more difficult. This increases the chance of gum disease, tooth decay, and stains." Which is the practical reason the cleaning standard goes up.

What if a bracket or wire is poking?

There is a standard fix. "Braces (brackets and wires) can be sharp and poke the gums, cheeks, lips or tongue. Sharp areas can be covered by special orthodontic wax to prevent injury."

Does my child need to be careful playing sport?

Protruding teeth are a risk with or without braces. Orthodontics Australia notes that "protrusive upper front teeth can make your child prone to injury - particularly while playing sports", and the Department lists that "front teeth that stick out or are not in line with other teeth, are more likely to be injured during sports or in a fall". What your child should wear during treatment is a question for the treating practitioner.

Will the teeth stay straight after the braces come off?

Only with a retainer. "Relapse - Teeth can move once braces are taken off. Retainers should be worn to prevent this from happening."

My child's teeth are a bit crooked — do they definitely need treatment?

Not necessarily. "Not many people have perfectly straight teeth. Not all crooked teeth require treatment." Where treatment is recommended, the Department's reasons include difficulty keeping teeth clean, uneven "wear and tear", injury risk and self-confidence.

Related services and further reading

Children's dentistry

Children's braces and Invisalign

Orthodontics

Traditional orthodontic braces

Internal lingual braces

Top tips for children's dental hygiene

Should my child see a paediatric dentist or general dentist?

Understanding your treatment

How can we help?

If you are thinking about braces for your child, our team can arrange an assessment at any of our nine practices. Call 13 13 16 or book online. Eligible children may also be bulk billed for basic dental care under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule , which covers general check-ups rather than braces.

Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

Interest-free payment plans, HICAPS on-site claiming and bulk billing for eligible children under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule.

Call 13 13 16 or book online.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online via coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16
Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed
Clinics	Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie

This article is general in nature and does not replace advice from a registered dental practitioner who has examined you. Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

How can parents help a child prepare for braces?

Core Dental suggests listening to your child's worries, planning food choices, explaining why treatment is worthwhile, and packing a toothbrush for school. Our orthodontic team can answer your child's

questions at the consultation.

Which snacks are hard on braces?

Sticky, hard and crunchy foods can damage braces or leave pieces behind. Core Dental suggests keeping messy snacks as foods that are safe for home, not for school, and your orthodontic team will give a full list.

Why do teenagers worry about getting braces?

The tween and teen years already involve changes in friendships and self-image. Because appearance and self-esteem are closely linked, braces can feel daunting. Talking openly and answering questions helps children feel ready.

What is a simple school tip for a child with braces?

Pack a toothbrush in your child's school bag. If food gets stuck, they can clean their teeth quietly in the bathroom. Core Dental recommends planning this together before braces are fitted.

When can children have an orthodontic assessment at Core Dental?

At Core Dental an assessment can be arranged from around age 9 to 10 when your dentist recommends it. Timing varies for each child, and not every child needs braces.

Does Core Dental offer children's braces and Invisalign?

Yes. Core Dental offers children's braces and Invisalign, along with traditional and internal lingual braces, with specialist orthodontists available. Your child's orthodontic team will advise which option suits them after an assessment.

How do I book a braces assessment for my child at Core Dental?

Call 13 13 16 or book online at coredental.com.au and ask for an orthodontic assessment for your child. We will arrange a time at one of our nine Core Dental clinics.