Why Are Crooked Teeth a Problem? | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/why-are-crooked-teeth-a-problem/

Details:

Crooked teeth, also called malocclusion, can affect how your teeth look and how they work. Crowded or misaligned teeth are harder to clean, which may make gum problems more likely, and an uneven bite can place extra pressure on some teeth and on the jaw joint. At Core Dental our dentists and orthodontists can assess your bite and explain whether straightening may help. This article is general information and does not replace an examination.

Why are crooked teeth considered a problem?

Crooked teeth present both appearance and function concerns. They can change the way your upper and lower teeth meet, which may place some teeth under extra pressure and lead to chipping or small notches near the gum line. Over time, uneven wear can flatten or wear down the edges of teeth. Not everyone with crooked teeth will have problems, and an examination is the way to find out what applies to you.

How can crooked teeth affect your gums?

It is harder to remove plaque and bacteria from crowded areas when teeth overlap or sit out of line. Bacteria that are not cleaned away can multiply and may contribute to gum disease, which often starts as inflamed, red gums that bleed when you brush or floss. If gum disease is not treated, it can progress to damage of the soft tissues, receding gums, deeper pockets around the teeth, loss of the bone that supports the teeth and, eventually, tooth loss. Regular cleans and good home care help, whether or not your teeth are straight.

Can crooked teeth damage the teeth themselves?

A poorly aligned bite can concentrate chewing forces on particular teeth. This may cause chipping, notches at the gum line, flattening of the biting surfaces and small fractures at the edges. Premature wear can leave teeth more sensitive, and in some cases it may add to gum recession and reduced bone support around the roots. Your dentist can look for early signs of wear and talk through your options.

Can crooked teeth cause jaw pain or headaches?

They can contribute for some people. A bite that does not fit together evenly may place extra forces on the jaw joint, which can be linked with jaw pain, earache and headaches. There are other possible causes of these symptoms, so it is sensible to have them checked. You may like to read about what may be causing jaw pain .

Are there wider health concerns linked to crooked teeth?

Gum disease has been linked in general terms with other health conditions, and keeping plaque under control matters for your mouth and your overall wellbeing. Crooked teeth do not cause these conditions by themselves, and the links are complex. If you have concerns about your general health, please talk to your doctor as well as your dentist.

What are the common types of bite and alignment problems?

Orthodontists describe several common patterns, and some people have more than one.

Crowding

Crowding happens when there is not enough room in the jaw for all of the teeth to sit normally. Teeth can be harder to clean, which may increase the chance of gum disease, and crowding can affect how the teeth work together.

Spacing

Spacing means there is more room in the jaw than the teeth need. It can relate to smaller teeth, jaw growth, genetics, tongue habits or missing teeth, and neighbouring teeth sometimes drift into a gap. Larger gaps can make it harder for the gums to stay healthy in some people.

Crossbite

A crossbite is when the upper and lower jaws are misaligned so that one or more upper teeth bite on the inside of the lower teeth. It can occur at the front or the sides and may lead to extra wear, gum problems and bone loss.

Overbite

An overbite is when the upper teeth overlap the lower teeth by a large amount. It can come from genetics, habits or the way the supporting bone has developed, and may contribute to gum irritation, wear on the lower teeth and jaw pain.

Underbite

An underbite is when the lower front teeth sit in front of the upper front teeth, usually because of the way the jaws have grown. It can affect how the front teeth or molars work, lead to wear and sometimes cause jaw and joint discomfort.

How can orthodontic treatment help?

Straightening teeth with options such as braces or Invisalign aligners can make teeth easier to clean and may help the bite work more evenly, as well as changing the look of your smile. Our practices provide orthodontic care, and Core Dental is an Invisalign Blue Diamond provider, as stated on coredental.com.au. Suitability depends on your teeth, gums and goals, and results vary for each person.

How can we help?

If you are concerned about crowded, spaced or misaligned teeth, our team can arrange an examination at any of our nine Core Dental practices. Call 13 13 16 or book online. We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans. Read about orthodontics , Invisalign or specialist orthodontists .

Further detail from Core Dental

The following points are drawn from Core Dental's own published material on this topic. They are included here for completeness, and anything that applies to your own treatment should be confirmed with your clinician.

Bacteria that are not properly removed will multiply and might trigger periodontal disease, which begins as gum inflammation, redness, and bleeding while brushing and flossing. Correctly positioning your teeth for proper alignment and function will help prevent future dental problems and make a significant contribution to keeping your teeth for life and maintaining a healthy mouth and body. All problems in the oral cavity are best treated in the early stages.

The published list of problems, and the sentence that keeps it honest

Crooked teeth are usually discussed either as a cosmetic matter or as a looming disaster. The state health advice does neither: it gives a specific list of consequences, and then says plainly that not every case needs fixing.

Start with the honest part. The Victorian Department of Health: "Not many people have perfectly straight teeth. Not all crooked teeth require treatment."

Both halves are worth holding onto. Perfectly straight is not the baseline, and crookedness is not automatically a condition.

Now the list, which is where the real reasons live. The Department's own account of why crooked, crowded and overlapping teeth can cause problems:

"Difficulty keeping teeth clean. It is easier for food and plaque to get stuck. It may also be harder to get a toothbrush or dental floss into the correct position to clean well."

"Plaque and food left on teeth can increase the risk of tooth decay and gum disease"

"Eating and chewing may be difficult when there are big gaps, or when teeth do not bite together properly. This can affect your nutrition and digestion. You may also need to move your jaw in difficult positions to get your upper and lower teeth to line up."

"Injury to the gum. If a tooth bites onto the opposite gum instead of another tooth, it may dig into the gum and cause pain or damage."

"Crooked teeth can make it difficult to swallow or get in the way of lips closing together properly. This can dry out your teeth or mouth."

"In some cases, crooked teeth can make it difficult to speak properly. You may lisp or whistle while speaking."

"Breathing problems in some people when the jaws are setback in position."

"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. Other crooked teeth may even make you bite your tongue or cheek accidentally."

"Wear and tear. Biting and chewing can wear crooked teeth down in uneven and unusual ways. These areas can be difficult to repair, as fillings are more likely to break or wear down as well."

"Self-confidence. People may not feel comfortable showing their teeth when they talk or smile. Some people may not smile at all"

Three of those are rarely mentioned and worth drawing out. Lips that cannot close properly "can dry out your teeth or mouth" — and a dry mouth brings its own decay risk. Wear that is "difficult to repair, as fillings are more likely to break or wear down as well" is a slow, compounding problem rather than a single event. And self-confidence is on the Department's own clinical list, not relegated to a separate cosmetic category.

What counts as a bite problem. The Department defines the main ones with reference points you can check:

"Excessive overbite. Upper front teeth normally cover less than half of the lower front teeth when the teeth are biting. When the upper front teeth cover more than half of the lower teeth, this could be an excessive overbite."

"Underbite. The lower jaw normally sits behind the upper jaw at rest. When the lower front teeth sit in front of the upper front teeth, this could be an underbite."

"Crowded teeth. When there is not enough space in the mouth for all the teeth to fit properly, teeth will be crowded. They may overlap, grow crooked, or not erupt fully. Crowding can be caused by large teeth, a small jaw, or both."

"Spacing and gaps. When there is too much space in the mouth, there will be gaps between teeth. This can happen when teeth are missing, small or mis-shaped. A large jaw or a combination of causes may also be responsible."

"Protruding front teeth. This is often seen in children or adults with a history of thumb- or dummy-sucking." The Department adds that the upper jaw and front teeth are pushed forward, and that "protruding teeth may also sit in front of (or on top of) the lower lip".

Note that crowding has two possible causes — large teeth, a small jaw, or both — which is why it is not something to self-diagnose from a mirror.

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Orthodontic treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 15 December 2025). Accessed 6 November 2026.

How alignment is actually assessed, and when gaps are fine

If the honest answer is that not all crooked teeth need treating, the next question is how anyone tells the difference. The published answer is an assessment rather than an opinion, and it uses more than a look in the mouth.

The Department's diagnostic list , verbatim: "a visual examination and photographs"; "x-rays of the teeth and jaws"; "impressions or scans of the teeth".

X-rays are there because the relevant information includes teeth that have not arrived yet. Orthodontics Australia, the information service of the Australian Society of Orthodontists, describes the same thing from the orthodontist's side: "Your orthodontist's assessment will cover existing teeth as well as those that are yet to break the surface to help predict their future growth."

And an assessment can conclude "leave it". On gaps specifically, the Department is explicit: "Often gapped teeth can be left as they are if they are not a concern or do not cause any issues. A person with gapped teeth may benefit from treatment if it prevents damage or improves a person's self-esteem."

Prevents damage, or improves self-esteem. Those are the two grounds it names, and neither is "teeth should be straight".

Several gaps close without any treatment at all. "Gaps between baby teeth are very normal. In most cases, these gaps close by themselves with growth and time." And for adult teeth: "Gaps between adult front teeth often close by themselves as more adult teeth come through." The Department describes the sequence in detail — when baby teeth come through "around six to nine months", the front teeth may have a gap and the fraenum may sit low on the gum, and "by the time the child turns one, the fraenum may have shortened, and more teeth may have come through and closed any gaps".

The most common cause of a front gap is not the teeth. "The most common cause of gapped front teeth is a fraenum that sits lower than usual and keeps the two top front teeth apart. The fraenum inside the upper lip is a fold of skin that attaches the top lip to the upper gum. If you lift up your top lip, you should be able to feel it easily."

Its other listed causes include natural development, missing teeth — "some children are born missing one or two teeth" — extra teeth in the bone, small teeth, large jaws, and in severe tongue-tie, the lingual fraenum affecting the lower front teeth.

When a gap does matter , the Department names two issues: "self-consciousness - some people may feel embarrassed and may not want to smile", and "crowded or crooked teeth - a large gap between the front teeth may not leave enough room for other teeth to come through. This may cause problems with a person's bite."

Who to ask, and when. "Talk to your oral health professional who can help identify any problems and suggest solutions." For children, Orthodontics Australia gives a window: "we recommend children visit a registered specialist orthodontist for an assessment between the ages of 7-10 years old", because "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."

It also removes the pressure to pick a 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 for anyone past that window, the Department's position is short: "Adults of any age can have orthodontic treatment, if required."

Sources: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Orthodontic treatment, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 15 December 2025); Teeth - gapped teeth, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (reviewed 1 July 2025); Orthodontics Australia (Australian Society of Orthodontists), When to see an Orthodontist, orthodonticsaustralia.org.au . All accessed 6 November 2026.

Frequently asked questions

Are crooked teeth just a cosmetic issue?

Not always. Crooked teeth can affect how you look, but they can also make cleaning harder and change how your bite works. A dentist can examine your teeth and explain whether treatment may offer functional benefits for you.

Do crooked teeth cause gum disease?

Crooked teeth do not cause gum disease on their own, but crowded areas can trap plaque and be harder to clean. Gentle, thorough brushing, cleaning between teeth and regular check-ups help reduce the risk.

What is malocclusion?

Malocclusion is the term for teeth or jaws that do not fit together in the usual way. It includes crowding, spacing, crossbite, overbite and underbite. An orthodontist or dentist can assess which type you have.

Can adults straighten crooked teeth?

Many adults have orthodontic treatment, using options such as braces or clear aligners. Suitability depends on the health of your teeth and gums and your goals. A dentist or orthodontist can explain

your options after an examination.

Can crooked teeth cause jaw pain?

For some people, an uneven bite may place extra forces on the jaw joint and contribute to jaw pain, earache or headaches. Other conditions can cause similar symptoms, so please have them checked by a dentist.

Do all crooked teeth need treatment?

No, and the published advice says so directly. The Victorian Department of Health: "Not many people have perfectly straight teeth. Not all crooked teeth require treatment."

What problems can crooked teeth actually cause?

The Department's list includes difficulty keeping teeth clean, increased risk of "tooth decay and gum disease", difficulty eating and chewing, "injury to the gum" where a tooth bites onto the opposite gum, difficulty swallowing or closing the lips — which "can dry out your teeth or mouth" — speech effects where "you may lisp or whistle while speaking", "breathing problems in some people when the jaws are setback in position", greater risk of injury to protruding front teeth during sport or a fall, uneven "wear and tear", and self-confidence.

How do I know if I have an overbite?

The Department gives a reference point: "Upper front teeth normally cover less than half of the lower front teeth when the teeth are biting. When the upper front teeth cover more than half of the lower teeth, this could be an excessive overbite."

What causes crowded teeth?

"When there is not enough space in the mouth for all the teeth to fit properly, teeth will be crowded. They may overlap, grow crooked, or not erupt fully. Crowding can be caused by large teeth, a small jaw, or both."

Why do my front teeth have a gap?

Most often it is not the teeth at all. "The most common cause of gapped front teeth is a fraenum that sits lower than usual and keeps the two top front teeth apart" — the fold of skin "that attaches the top lip to the upper gum". Other causes the Department lists include natural development, missing teeth, extra teeth in the bone, small teeth and large jaws.

Will a gap close on its own?

Often, yes. "Gaps between baby teeth are very normal. In most cases, these gaps close by themselves with growth and time", and "gaps between adult front teeth often close by themselves as more adult teeth come through".

When does a gap need treating?

The Department names two grounds: "A person with gapped teeth may benefit from treatment if it prevents damage or improves a person's self-esteem." Otherwise, "often gapped teeth can be left as they are if they are not a concern or do not cause any issues".

How is alignment assessed?

With more than a look. The Department lists "a visual examination and photographs", "x-rays of the teeth and jaws", and "impressions or scans of the teeth". Orthodontics Australia explains why images matter: an assessment "will cover existing teeth as well as those that are yet to break the surface to help predict their future growth".

At what age should a child be assessed?

Orthodontics Australia, the information service of the Australian Society of Orthodontists, recommends "children visit a registered specialist orthodontist for an assessment between the ages of 7-10 years old", when a child has "a mix of adult and baby teeth". It also notes that "there's no one 'best' age to start orthodontic treatment - it varies from child to child".

Is it too late for me as an adult?

The Department's answer is one line: "Adults of any age can have orthodontic treatment, if required."

Related services and further reading

Orthodontics

Invisalign treatment

Orthodontic braces

Specialist orthodontists

What is causing my jaw pain?

How to keep your gums healthy

When should I consult a specialist for a dental problem?

Contact Core Dental

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.

Invisalign Blue Diamond provider, as stated on coredental.com.au.

We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.

Contact Core Dental

Phone	13 13 16
Booking	Online through coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16

Hours	Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday mornings, Sunday closed

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.

What does the term malocclusion cover?

Malocclusion means teeth or jaws that do not fit together in the usual way, including crowding, spacing, crossbite, overbite and underbite. Core Dental dentists and orthodontists can assess your bite and explain what applies to you.

How can crowded teeth affect oral health?

Crowded or overlapping teeth are harder to clean, so plaque can build up and may contribute to gum disease. Core Dental dentists can show you cleaning techniques and suggest whether straightening may help.

What problems can an uneven bite cause?

An uneven bite may place extra pressure on some teeth, causing chipping, notches near the gum line or wear, and may add strain to the jaw joint. Our Core Dental team can examine your bite and talk through options.

What is the difference between an overbite and an underbite?

With an overbite the upper teeth overlap the lower teeth by a large amount, and with an underbite the lower front teeth sit in front of the upper teeth. Core Dental clinicians can identify which you have.

What is a crossbite?

A crossbite is when one or more upper teeth bite on the inside of the lower teeth, at the front or sides. Core Dental orthodontic care may be discussed if it is causing wear or gum concerns.

What orthodontic options does Core Dental offer?

Core Dental offers orthodontic care including braces and Invisalign, and we are an Invisalign Blue Diamond provider as stated on coredental.com.au. Your dentist or orthodontist will advise which option may suit you.

How do I book an orthodontic assessment at Core Dental?

Call 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au to arrange an assessment at any of our nine Melbourne clinics. We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans.