



TWO-PHASE ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT: The Appropriate Treatment at the Appropriate Time

WHAT IS “TWO-PHASE” ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT?

Two-phase orthodontic treatment consists of two separate times when a child receives orthodontic treatment. A first phase of treatment is done while the child still has many or most of their primary or “baby” teeth. A second phase takes place when the child has most or all of their permanent teeth. Braces may or may not be used during a first phase of treatment. Other appliances (the name used for braces and other devices for orthodontic correction) may be used.

Your orthodontist has the training and clinical experience necessary to diagnose and treat your child's orthodontic problem. Orthodontists must complete college requirements, graduate from dental school and successfully complete a minimum of two academic years of study in an orthodontic residency program accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation. Only those who have completed this rigorous education and passed the national speciality board exam may call themselves “orthodontists” and only orthodontists may be members of the Canadian Association of Orthodontists.

WHY DOES MY CHILD NEED TWO-PHASE TREATMENT?

Your child's orthodontist believes that your child could benefit from two phases of orthodontist treatment, based on an examination of your child's mouth and study of diagnostic records. The goal of this treatment is to create a better environment for your child's permanent teeth.

A FIRST PHASE OF TREATMENT IS INITIATED TO:

- Prevent a problem from developing (preventive treatment)
- Intercept a developing problem (interceptive treatment)
- Guide the growth of the jaw bones that support the teeth (growth

modification)

Without this first phase of treatment, your orthodontist has determined that your child's problem, if left alone, will create an unhealthy environment for the growth and development of your child's teeth, gums, jaws and face. The treatment will be timed to predictable stages of dental development to provide the greatest potential for improvement and correction of your child's malocclusion (bad bite).

Most patients will require a second phase of treatment, often with traditional braces, to complete the tooth and jaw alignment that was started during the first phase of treatment.

HOW DOES TWO-PHASE TREATMENT BENEFIT MY CHILD?

A first phase of treatment benefits patients physically, enabling them to bite or chew more effectively. It may reduce the risk of breaking front teeth that protrude. And for many patients, there is improvement in self-esteem.

Younger patients may be more cooperative and follow the orthodontist's instructions on appliance wear and oral hygiene. And the desired changes that result from a first phase treatment may contribute to long-term stability, meaning that teeth stay where the orthodontist has moved them.

A second phase of treatment moves permanent teeth into their final positions.

DOES A CHILD'S GROWTH AFFECT ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT?

Orthodontic treatment and a child's growth can complement each other. By timing orthodontic treatment to predictable stages of dental development, the orthodontist may be able to take advantage of your child's growth and development. Some problems that can be treated quite well in a growing child may require corrective surgery if treated after growth has occurred.

THE GOALS OF TWO-PHASE TREATMENT

YOUR ORTHODONTIST HAS THESE GOALS IN MIND FOR YOUR CHILD'S TREATMENT:

- A proper relationship of teeth and jaws, so that they work correctly,
- Correct alignment of the teeth, for a beautiful smile,
- Positioning of the teeth and jaws for an attractive face and profile.

TO REACH THESE GOALS, YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO:

- Follow instructions for appliance wear,
- Keep the appliance, teeth and gums clean by, brushing and flossing as prescribed,
- Keep scheduled appointments with the orthodontist,

- Visit the dentist at least every six months,
- Avoid food that may damage the appliance,
- Maintain a healthy diet.

HOW DO I KNOW TWO-PHASE TREATMENT IS RIGHT FOR MY CHILD?

Orthodontic care is not a “one size fits all” approach. Each patient has a unique problem that requires a unique treatment plan. What is right for one child may not be right for another. The diagnosis of your child's problem and the treatment plan are the result of study of your child's mouth and diagnostic records.

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