

Nine Things to Consider When Your Child Needs Braces

1 Qualifications and experience: If you're considering orthodontic treatment, it's important you find out what qualifications and experience your orthodontist has. An orthodontist is a specialist, who after graduating from dental school, completes additional full-time university-based education in an accredited orthodontic residency program supervised by orthodontic experts. Specialty training requires an additional three academic years and admission is extremely competitive. Mastering the physics of tooth movement and understanding the biology of facial development and guidance, orthodontists are the specifically educated experts in dentistry to straighten teeth and align jaws. Orthodontists limit their practices to orthodontics and dentofacial orthopedics. This means that orthodontic treatment is what they do, and all they do.

2 Treatment options: Developments in orthodontic technology means there is a range of treatment methods available. They may not all be suitable for your case, but you can find out which ones could be right for you at an initial consultation prior to starting treatment. However, prior to booking a consultation, look at your orthodontic practice's website to find out what treatments are offered. This will enable you to ask informed questions of your treatment options when the opportunity arises.

3 Previous work: Finding an orthodontist who works close to where you live or work is certainly convenient when it comes to booking appointments, but check to see if the quality of their treatment is what you are looking for. You can do this by asking people you know if they chose the practice for their orthodontic care, reading reviews online, and looking at before and after photos on their website, or during your initial consultation.

4 Industry recognition: Is your orthodontic practice an industry-recognized provider of the treatments they offer? Selecting an orthodontist who is a member of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO*) is your assurance that you have chosen an orthodontist: the dental specialist with at least 2-3 years of advanced specialty education in orthodontics in a university-based program accredited by the American Dental Association. And if you are interested in Invisalign treatment, check to see what status your orthodontist and his/her practice holds. Their provider status is an indication of the number of cases they consistently complete.

5 Cost and finance: Orthodontic treatment is a significant financial investment but most orthodontists understand this and provide payment plans to help with the cost. Before you embark on treatment, make sure you have a full quote which details all fees involved. This should also include retention post-treatment. Every case is unique, including yours, so be sure to make a decision based on the cost for your treatment.

6 Consultations: Embarking on orthodontic treatment isn't a decision to be made lightly. You need to be fully informed about cost, treatment options and the impact on your lifestyle. Most orthodontists will offer a FREE consultation, during which they'll review your medical history, talk to you about your treatment objectives, assess your orthodontic needs, take photographs and x-rays and provide you with a treatment plan, which will include a recommendation on the type of treatment you could most benefit from, along with the cost and duration.

7 At home and post-treatment care: While undergoing orthodontic treatment, you'll have regular appointments with your orthodontist (every six to eight weeks), as well as your usual appointments with your dentist. However, in between times, you want to know that in the unlikely event you experience a problem, help and support is there. It's also important to receive help and support post-treatment as well. Retention is a vital phase of your orthodontic treatment journey as this helps to keep your teeth in position once your appliance has been removed. Ensure retention is included in your treatment plan and cost.

8 Relationships with dentists: Although you will be under the care of your orthodontist throughout your treatment, your dentist also needs to be kept informed. Find out what the relationship is between your orthodontist and your dentist. It should be one of open communication, and they should be working together to ensure you get the best treatment possible. While your orthodontist will be responsible for your appliance, your dentist will continue to be responsible for your overall oral hygiene, so both will be involved with your treatment.

9 Clinic environment: On average, orthodontic treatment lasts between 12 and 24 months. This is a reasonable length of time to be attending appointments so you want to be comfortable and relaxed in the office. If your orthodontist offers a free consultation, in addition to getting information on your treatment options, this is also an opportunity for you to get a taste of the practice. Are you warmly welcomed by reception? Do you feel at ease in the treatment area? Are the staff friendly and approachable? Make sure the clinic is a place you are happy to spend time in and a place where you feel supported.



John J. Metz DMD, MS
(813) 948-6389
www.metzorthodontics.com

Dr. John Metz received his orthodontic training at the University of Florida where he also completed a Master of Science degree in Dental Sciences with a concentration in Orthodontics. He is an active member of AAO, and an Invisalign Elite provider.