

When Is the Best Time to Start Thinking About Braces?

Braces often enter the conversation after someone notices crooked teeth, crowding, or a bite that doesn't look quite right. However, the best time to start thinking about orthodontic care may come well before braces are actually placed.

For children, an early evaluation allows us to study how the teeth and jaws are developing. For teenagers, timing may depend on permanent tooth eruption, growth, and treatment readiness. Adults can also begin orthodontic treatment whenever they're ready to improve their smile or address alignment concerns.

At Marks Orthodontics, we don't believe every patient should start treatment at the same age. We evaluate each person individually and recommend care based on development, orthodontic needs, and long-term goals.

The Best Time to Start Thinking About Braces Is Before Treatment Becomes Urgent

Waiting until every tooth looks noticeably crooked can limit the opportunity to observe how a child's smile is developing. An orthodontic evaluation provides useful information even when braces aren't needed yet.

We generally recommend that children receive their first orthodontic screening around **age seven**. At that age, most children have a combination of baby teeth and permanent teeth, giving us an early look at tooth eruption, spacing, jaw growth, and bite development.

This doesn't mean that every seven-year-old needs braces. Many children can continue growing without active treatment while we monitor their development.

The purpose of an early visit is to identify the right treatment window rather than start treatment unnecessarily. Our [pre-orthodontics](#) services help us evaluate growth and determine whether intervention, observation, or future treatment may be appropriate.

Families can also explore our [braces](#) options to understand how comprehensive orthodontic treatment may support alignment and bite correction when the time is right.

Why Is Age Seven Recommended for an Orthodontic Evaluation?

Seven may sound early, especially when a child still has several baby teeth. However, that combination of baby and permanent teeth provides valuable clues about how the mouth is developing.

During an evaluation, we can look for concerns such as:

- Crowded or overlapping teeth
- A narrow upper jaw

- Crossbites, underbites, or significant overbites
- Permanent teeth that may not have enough space
- Missing, delayed, or unusually positioned teeth
- Difficulty biting or chewing
- Uneven jaw growth
- Early or late loss of baby teeth

Some concerns are easier to monitor or address while a child is still growing. Others are better treated later, after more permanent teeth have developed.

Our responsibility is to distinguish between those situations. **Starting the conversation early gives families more information and more time to plan**, even when immediate treatment isn't recommended.

Does an Early Evaluation Mean a Child Will Get Braces Right Away?

No. An early orthodontic evaluation is not the same as beginning braces.

In many cases, we evaluate a child at age seven or eight and recommend observation rather than treatment. We may schedule periodic growth checks so we can monitor permanent tooth eruption and jaw development.

Marks Orthodontics notes that many children do not need comprehensive orthodontic treatment until their permanent teeth have developed, often around age 12. Certain skeletal concerns may benefit from attention earlier, which is why individual evaluation matters.

This approach helps us avoid treating too soon. It also reduces the chance that an important developmental concern will go unnoticed until it becomes more difficult to address.

The best timing is based on the child—not a standard birthday or school grade.

When Might Early Orthodontic Treatment Be Recommended?

Some children benefit from limited treatment before they're ready for full braces. This stage is often called early or interceptive orthodontic treatment.

Early care may be considered when we need to:

- Guide jaw growth
- Widen a narrow upper jaw
- Correct certain crossbites
- Preserve space for permanent teeth
- Improve the path of incoming teeth
- Address an underbite
- Reduce severe crowding
- Protect teeth that protrude significantly

Depending on the concern, treatment may involve an expander, space maintainer, partial braces, or another orthodontic appliance.

Early treatment doesn't necessarily eliminate the possibility of braces later. Its purpose is often to address a specific developmental issue and create a healthier foundation for future tooth movement.

We explain why treatment is being recommended, what it is intended to accomplish, and whether another phase may be needed later. Families deserve a clear understanding of the full plan before moving forward.

What Is the Most Common Age for Braces?

Many children and teenagers begin comprehensive braces between approximately ages 10 and 14. By then, most or all permanent teeth have emerged, while the jaws may still be growing.

This stage can be useful because we can guide permanent teeth into better positions and address bite concerns during an active period of development. It is also a time when many patients are mature enough to participate in caring for their braces.

Still, there is no single perfect age.

One 11-year-old may be ready while another child of the same age needs more time for teeth to erupt. A teenager who has completed more growth may require a different plan from a younger patient with the same visible crowding.

Before recommending braces, we evaluate:

- Which permanent teeth have erupted
- How much jaw growth remains
- The type and severity of the bite concern
- Available space in the mouth
- Oral hygiene
- The patient's ability to follow treatment instructions
- The expected benefits of starting now versus waiting

Starting at the right developmental stage can make treatment more efficient and predictable.

What Signs Suggest It's Time to Schedule an Evaluation?

Parents don't need to diagnose an orthodontic problem before bringing their child to us. Still, certain changes may indicate that an evaluation would be helpful.

Consider scheduling a consultation when you notice:

- Teeth coming in behind or in front of other teeth
- Crowding that makes brushing difficult
- Large gaps between teeth
- A lower jaw that appears unusually forward or backward
- Upper and lower teeth that don't meet properly
- Frequent cheek or tongue biting
- Difficulty chewing certain foods

- Mouth breathing
- Protruding front teeth
- Permanent teeth that seem delayed
- A smile that affects the child's confidence

Some orthodontic concerns are not obvious without X-rays and a professional examination. A smile can appear relatively straight while developing teeth, roots, or the bite still require attention.

That's why we encourage families to schedule an evaluation based on age as well as visible signs.

What Happens If a Child Is Older Than Seven?

There's no need to worry when a child hasn't had an orthodontic evaluation by age seven. **It isn't too late to begin the conversation.**

We regularly meet older children and teenagers who are visiting an orthodontist for the first time. We assess their current stage of development and create recommendations based on what we see now.

An older child may be ready to start treatment, or we may recommend waiting for additional teeth to erupt. Either way, the visit provides clarity.

During our [initial consultations & new patients](#) process, we review medical and dental history, complete an oral examination, and obtain the X-rays and photographs needed to assess treatment needs. The consultation also includes a discussion of the patient's orthodontic status and possible treatment options.

Are Teenagers Too Old for Early Orthodontic Planning?

Teenagers are not too old to benefit from a thoughtful orthodontic evaluation. In fact, adolescence is one of the most common times to begin braces.

By the teenage years, permanent teeth are usually more developed, making it easier to create a comprehensive treatment plan. Many teens are also motivated by upcoming milestones such as graduation, college, sports seasons, performances, or senior photographs.

Treatment timing should not be based only on appearance or social events, though. We consider tooth development, bite alignment, oral health, and the complexity of the necessary movement.

Our goal is to recommend a plan that fits both the patient's clinical needs and daily life. We also explain appointment schedules, food restrictions, hygiene expectations, and ways to protect braces during sports and activities.

Teens can review our [what to expect](#) information before beginning treatment so they understand each step of the process.

Can Adults Start Braces at Any Age?

Yes. **Adults can begin orthodontic treatment well beyond their teenage years.**

Some adults never had the opportunity to receive braces when they were younger. Others completed treatment years ago but experienced shifting over time. Many simply reach a point when they're ready to address crowding, spacing, or bite concerns that have bothered them for years.

Healthy teeth can be moved at many ages. Adult treatment planning may involve additional considerations, including existing dental restorations, gum health, missing teeth, or coordination with a general dentist.

At Marks Orthodontics, we create plans around each adult patient's smile goals, professional schedule, and treatment needs. Braces remain a reliable option for adults, while [clear aligners](#) may be considered for qualifying teenagers and adults seeking a more discreet, removable approach.

Clear aligners are not the best choice for every patient or every orthodontic concern. We recommend the option that gives us the appropriate control and supports a predictable outcome.

Should Families Wait Until a Dentist Recommends Braces?

A dentist may be the first person to notice signs that an orthodontic evaluation would be helpful. However, a formal referral is not required to schedule a consultation at Marks Orthodontics.

Dentists and orthodontists play complementary roles. A general dentist focuses on preventive care, cleanings, restorative treatment, and overall dental health. An orthodontist has advanced training in tooth movement, jaw development, and bite alignment.

Patients should continue visiting their general dentist during orthodontic treatment. After evaluating a new patient, we can share a detailed report and treatment plan with the dentist so everyone remains informed.

Families don't need to wait for a problem to become obvious or for someone else to initiate the conversation. A complimentary evaluation can help determine whether treatment is needed now, later, or not at all.

How Can Families Prepare Financially for Braces?

Thinking about braces early gives families time to prepare for both the clinical and financial sides of treatment.

The total investment depends on the type and complexity of care. During the consultation process, we discuss the proposed plan, estimated treatment length, insurance information, and available payment arrangements.

Marks Orthodontics provides personalized in-office interest-free financing and discusses possible incentives, including qualifying payment-in-full discounts.

Families can review our [financials](#) information before the consultation. This can help parents understand available options and prepare questions about orthodontic benefits or monthly payments.

For households with multiple children, early evaluations can also help with long-term planning. Siblings may need treatment at different times, and we can explain who may be ready now and who can continue being monitored.

Why Personalized Treatment Timing Matters

Braces are most effective when treatment begins for the right reasons and at the right stage of development.

Starting too early may lead to unnecessary treatment time. Waiting too long may allow certain concerns to become more complex. **Personalized timing helps us find the balance between those two possibilities.**

At Marks Orthodontics, we don't base treatment decisions on age alone. We study the teeth, jaws, bite, growth, oral health, and individual goals before recommending the next step.

We also want patients and parents to understand the reasoning behind our recommendations. Orthodontic care is a commitment, and clear communication helps families feel confident about the plan.

Patients who are unfamiliar with our practice can view our [office tour](#) before their appointment and become more comfortable with the environment.

Start the Braces Conversation With Marks Orthodontics

The best time to start thinking about braces is before you feel pressured to make a quick decision.

For children, that means scheduling an orthodontic evaluation around age seven so we can monitor growth and identify concerns early. For teenagers, it means evaluating permanent tooth development and treatment readiness. For adults, the right time may simply be when improving alignment becomes an important personal or oral-health goal.

Marks Orthodontics provides personalized specialist care from our Norton Shores office for families and adults throughout West Michigan. We welcome patients from [Muskegon](#), [North Muskegon](#), [Spring Lake](#), [Grand Haven](#), and neighboring communities.

You don't need to know whether braces are necessary before contacting us. That is what the evaluation is designed to determine.

When you're ready for clear answers and a plan based on your family's needs, [contact us to schedule a consultation](#). We'll help you understand the ideal timing and guide you through the next step with confidence.

Related Questions

Do all permanent teeth need to be present before braces begin?

Not always. Treatment may begin while a few permanent teeth are still developing, depending on the patient's bite, growth, and treatment goals.

Can siblings receive orthodontic evaluations during the same visit?

Families may ask about screening multiple children. Appointment timing and availability can vary, so our team can help coordinate the most convenient arrangement.

How often are braces appointments usually scheduled?

Orthodontic visits are commonly scheduled every four to eight weeks, although the exact frequency depends on the appliance and treatment plan.

Does losing baby teeth early affect braces timing?

It can. Early tooth loss may influence spacing and permanent tooth eruption, so an orthodontic evaluation can determine whether monitoring or treatment is appropriate.