

Frequently Asked Questions

6. How can a child's growth affect orthodontic treatment?

Orthodontic treatment and a child's growth can complement each other. For example, it is very common for an orthodontist to treat protrusion of the upper front teeth. Quite often, this problem is due to the lower jaw being shorter or less developed than the upper jaw. While the upper and lower jaws are still growing, orthodontic appliances can be used to help the growth of the lower jaw catch up to the growth of the upper jaw. A severe jaw length discrepancy, which can be treated quite well in a growing child, might very well require corrective surgery if left untreated until a period of slow or no jaw growth. Children who may have problems with the width or length of their jaws should be evaluated for treatment no later than age 10 for girls and age 12 for boys. The AAO recommends that all children have an orthodontic screening no later than age 7 as growth-related problems may be identified at this time.