



Chestnut Dental Associates Highlights Age 7 Guideline for First Orthodontic Evaluations

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Chestnut Dental Associates is drawing attention to a longstanding recommendation from the American Association of Orthodontists that children receive a first orthodontic evaluation by age 7, a reminder the practice is emphasizing as families schedule fall checkups at the start of the school year.

The age 7 benchmark exists for a developmental reason. By that age, most children have their first permanent molars and incisors in place, giving an orthodontist enough of the emerging bite to identify concerns while jaw growth is still underway. At this stage, problems such as crowding, crossbites, and irregular jaw growth are easier to guide, because the underlying bone is still developing and responsive.

Dr. Jonathan Chason, D.M.D., an orthodontist at Chestnut Dental Associates, said the early visit is often about observation rather than intervention. "The purpose of a growth-and-development evaluation is to establish a baseline and watch how the teeth and jaws are coming in over time," Hertzberg said. "When something is spotted early, there is often a chance to guide development in a way that keeps future care

simpler. The evaluation is diagnostic first, and treatment follows only when it is genuinely needed."

Most seven-year-olds do not require immediate treatment. In many cases an early visit results in a monitoring plan, with the orthodontist tracking growth until the appropriate time to consider any orthodontic treatment options. That distinction is central for parents, since an early appointment is intended to inform, not to accelerate care.

Several warning signs can prompt an earlier look. Parents may notice crowded or crooked incoming teeth, baby teeth lost much earlier or later than classmates, or a bite that does not meet correctly. Habits such as thumb sucking past age 5 and persistent mouth breathing can also affect development, as can jaw clicking. None of these signs necessarily indicates a problem requiring treatment, but they are reasons to have a specialist take a look.

Dr. Adam Donnell, D.M.D., M.S., President of the Massachusetts Association of Orthodontists, noted that the age 7 window reflects decades of clinical observation about when the mouth reveals enough to be useful. "By around age 7 an orthodontist can see how the permanent teeth are arriving and how the bite is forming," she said. "That timing lets a specialist catch developing issues that are far less obvious a few years earlier."

Families looking to understand what an evaluation involves can also consult Chestnut Dental's videos, which cover a range of pediatric and orthodontic topics in plain language for parents.

Chestnut Dental Associates has served Massachusetts families since 1970. The multi-specialty practice provides pediatric dentistry, orthodontics, and adult cosmetic dentistry across offices in Needham, Franklin, and Bedford, with coordinated care among its specialists. The orthodontic team includes four orthodontists who completed specialty residency training, working alongside the practice's pediatric and adult dentistry teams. The practice maintains longstanding ties to Boston Children's Hospital and the Harvard School of Dental Medicine and treats patients from infancy through adulthood.

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CHESTNUT DENTAL ASSOCIATES, P.C.

Chestnut Dental provides Pediatric, Orthodontic, and Adult Cosmetic Dentistry in a family-friendly setting. Evening,

Saturday, and emergency care are available. Board-certified pediatric specialists and Invisalign or traditional braces for all ages.

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