



# Orthodontics - One Size Fits All? Never!



By Dr. M. Constance Greeley

It makes sense to most patients that health care plans are not the same for everyone. But when it comes to orthodontic treatment, a lot of folks make some assumptions that are worth looking at a little more closely. Some widely held beliefs are that children don't need braces until they have all their permanent teeth, that braces are all the same, (aren't they?), that adults are "too old" to benefit from orthodontic treatment, or that orthodontics is only "cosmetic" and has no impact on health.

If you're a regular reader of my columns in this publication, you are most informed and know that the above statements are NOT true! Here's why:

Early intervention with children can prevent a lifetime of struggling with sleep disorders. Assessing a child's jaw relationship, breathing, sleep patterns, and speech can be quite beneficial if done early enough. When indicated, upper jaw expansion opens up space for teeth, avoids impacted teeth, promotes nasal breathing, and improves tongue placement (which, in turn, aids in increased speech therapy results). If adult sleep apnea can be avoided early, the patient can enjoy better health as an adult. So we encourage early evaluation to

determine if Phase I treatment is indicated. Even if early intervention is not necessary, periodic follow-ups will head off problems and improve final treatment outcomes.

Many young patients benefit when orthodontists can time treatment to be concurrent with their adolescent growth. But not every patient's growth spurt coincides with the eruption of permanent teeth. Seeing the patient periodically helps us select a more precise time to begin treatment. Certain x-rays and a review of family history also help to make this determination. When treatment is timely, growth becomes useful in correcting discrepancies. Missing this timing can result in finishes that are less desirable or that may require surgical jaw correction to get the best result. It is important to distinguish the difference between addressing jaw discrepancies (the orthopedic part of orthodontic treatment) and the alignment of teeth (the orthodontic part). Hence, the full name of the specialty: Orthodontics and Dental Facial Orthopedics.

"Braces" are not all the same. There are a number of different designs and customizations that orthodontists can select from when choosing which system will provide the optimal result for each patient. At Greeley Orthodontics we use a "self-ligating" bracket system that can be customized to deliver the specific type of "torque" appropriate for each tooth to achieve the best alignment. Self ligation-type brackets lower the amount of pressure that each tooth receives when the wire is placed. They reduce discomfort for the patient and eliminate the need for ties since there are doors to hold the wire in place. The use of doors - rather than ties or elastic ligatures -

decreases the amount of plaque accumulation. This facilitates oral hygiene during treatment.

Proper functioning upper and lower jaws can mean a lifetime of good dental function, improved breathing, and smart eating habits. Not being able to chew properly can lead to poor food choices and ultimately lead to poor digestion, compromised blood pressure, and other unnecessary health challenges.


It's true that there are many advantages to treating the growing child, but adults can also benefit greatly from orthodontic treatment. It's not only that well-aligned teeth can improve self esteem, orthodontics can also facilitate the placing of implants to help replace missing teeth, improve chewing, and avoid gastro intestinal issues such as GERD. These are just a few examples of how orthodontic treatment can support a healthy lifestyle in people of all ages.

If you have questions about how orthodontic treatment may improve your life, give us a call 484-346-7846 or visit us on the web at [www.GreeleyOrtho.com](http://www.GreeleyOrtho.com). We'll be happy to discuss possible treatment plans with you.

### Bio

**Dr. Connie Greeley went to Temple University School of Dentistry where she received her Doctor of Dental Surgery degree. She earned her certification in Pediatric Dentistry at the University of Maryland and then returned to Temple University for her certification in Orthodontics.**

**Dr. Greeley is board-certified by the American Board of Orthodontics. She serves on the Cleft Palate Team at A.I. DuPont Hospital for Children. Dr. Greeley is past-president of the Delaware State Dental Society, the Middle Atlantic Society of Orthodontists, and the Greater Philadelphia Society of Orthodontics. She is a member of the ADA and the AAO.**



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