

## AIM OF ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

Contemporary orthodontic treatment focuses on treating the whole face and not just the teeth. The ideal aim is to give every patient a perfect smile in a balanced face with all the natural teeth well aligned and in proper functional relationships.

## MINIMISING EXTRACTIONS

Many dental and jaw conditions warrant orthodontic treatment. Most people that require treatment have crowded or overlapped teeth. There are several ways to gain sufficient space in the dental arches. The two main ways involve expansion of the dental arch, or extract teeth.

Arch expansion is more easily achieved in younger growing patients, and is progressively more difficult with increasing age. All university training programs teach a range of extraction and non-extraction techniques to appropriately manage different orthodontic problems and achieve the best result for each patient.

We assess whether the appearance of the face and facial profile will be improved by dental extraction or by arch expansion. The patient's facial profile and jaw structure can greatly influence the decision on whether teeth should be removed or not. In some cases, teeth can be aligned within the dental arches without extraction, but may look aesthetically poorer to an result with extractions.

## WHEN EXTRACTIONS MAY BE NEEDED

While the patient, parent, dentist and orthodontist wish to retain rather than extract teeth, there are some factors which can limit the extent of expansion to gain space.

- Age of patient
- Facial shape (narrow or long faces)
- Facial profile (protruding jaw or receded chin)
- Prominence of lips
- Severity of crowding
- Size of teeth
- Degree of protrusion of teeth
- Risk of receding gums, shortening of the tooth roots or damage to tooth nerves
- Long-term stability of the result

We always attempt to minimise extractions, but in some cases, extractions are necessary to achieve the best facial and dental result.

## NEED FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT

Only detailed orthodontic assessment can establish whether alignment of the teeth can be achieved without extractions. The situation can be assessed from the age of seven and then monitor the patient's growth to determine the best age to start treatment.

A thorough evaluation process, involving taking photographs, impressions (moulds of the teeth) and radiographs (X-rays) is necessary before reaching a treatment decision. We can then formulate the best treatment plan from this information, considering all available options.

Treatment planning includes explanation and discussion with patients and parents, so that they are fully informed to participate in treatment decisions. This principle underlies the premise of "informed consent".

A detailed orthodontic assessment is the best way to acquaint yourself with all the faces and orthodontic treatment options for your specific needs or those of your child.

## THE ROLE OF YOUR DENTIST IN ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

When you seek orthodontic advice, the orthodontist usually sends your dentist a detailed report. Thus your dentist is kept informed and can often help you make decisions about your orthodontic treatment or the treatment of your child.

During orthodontic treatment, it is important that you or your child continue to see your dentist for regular check ups and preventive care to maintain optimum dental health.

## NATURE OF THIS INFORMATION

This brochure provides general background information and is therefore not comprehensive. Everyone is unique and the extent to which this information may apply to you, your child, or anyone else varies. To obtain complete information regarding your specific circumstances, you should seek the advice of your dental professional.