



Getting into Gear: Orthodontic Headgear



American Association of **Orthodontists**

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The American Association of Orthodontists thanks the faculty and staff representing Orthodontics, Center for Advanced Dental Education, Saint Louis University for their invaluable guidance, generosity, and the use of their facilities during the production of this brochure.

Partnership: You, Your Orthodontist and Your Dentist.

Achieving healthy, beautiful smiles is a team effort that involves the orthodontist, the family dentist, the patient (and the parents, if the patient is young) and, as needed, other dental specialists. The orthodontist provides the expertise, the treatment plan and the techniques to straighten teeth and align the jaws. The family dentist helps make sure that teeth and gums stay clean and healthy. *The patient must cooperate by following the dentist's and the orthodontist's instructions carefully so that the teeth and jaws move in the way desired and on the prescribed schedule.*

Because dental hygiene is so important, regular visits to the family dentist must continue every six months during orthodontic treatment (or more often, if recommended). It is essential that the patient avoid food which may damage orthodontic appliances. The patient must also maintain a healthy, nutritional diet to achieve the best possible results from treatment. A good diet provides essential nutrients to bones and tissues undergoing change during orthodontic treatment.

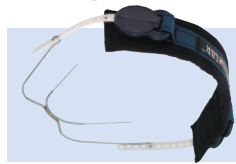


Now that your orthodontist has recommended a headgear as an important part of your treatment, it will help you to learn a little about it.

Headgear is a general name for a type of appliance that creates special forces for guiding the growth of your face and jaws. Orthodontists also use headgear to move your teeth into better position or to prevent them from moving when they're not supposed to. Because each case is different, the amount of time you'll need to wear your headgear will be determined by your orthodontist.

Here Are Two Common Types Of Headgear:

The "Facebow" type consists of a bow that fits into braces on your back teeth and a strap that fits behind your neck or over your head to provide the desired amount and direction of pressure.

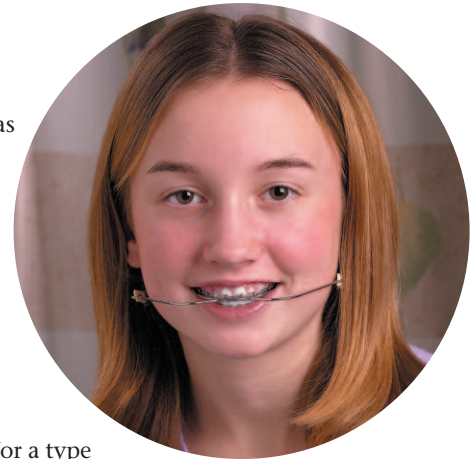


The "J Hook" type uses two individual wires with loops on their ends that attach to your braces. The wires are attached to a strap that fits over your head or behind your neck to supply the desired corrective pressure.



The type of headgear used in your treatment is what your orthodontist believes is best to guide your teeth and jaws into their new positions.

At first, your headgear may look a little strange to you, and it will seem a little awkward. But it's a necessary part of your orthodontic treatment. Rest assured the healthy, beautiful smile that will be yours for a lifetime will be well worth the effort you make now.



To get the best results from your headgear, follow these simple guidelines:

- Make sure to wear your headgear as directed by your orthodontist. *It only works when you wear it!*
- Always closely follow your orthodontist's instructions for wearing your headgear. If you do, you'll finish this part of your treatment as quickly as possible and with the best results.
- Always be careful and remove your headgear as you were taught. The headgear could injure your eyes, cheeks, lips, or your face.
(NOTE: In the event of even the most minor eye injury, please seek immediate medical help.)
- Be sure to remove your headgear before you begin running or playing sports, including rough-and-tumble games. Accidents can happen even when you're just having fun.
- Be careful to prevent anyone from grabbing or pulling on your headgear. Do not wear headgear in situations where there is a chance that it could be pulled off or pulled out of place.
- Take your headgear with you to every appointment.
- Your orthodontist will give you instructions on the care and cleaning of your headgear. To keep the appliance working as it should, be sure to follow those instructions carefully.

Your teeth may be tender or even slightly loose the first few days you wear your headgear. This tenderness is normal and will disappear as you adjust to this new part of your treatment. If you continue to be uncomfortable for more than a few days, be sure to let your orthodontist know.



It's Important To Choose An Orthodontist.

An orthodontist is a specialist in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of dental and facial irregularities. All orthodontists are dentists, but only about six percent of dentists are orthodontists. Admission to orthodontic programs is extremely competitive and selective.

It takes many years to become an orthodontist and the educational requirements are demanding.

An orthodontist must complete college requirements before starting a three- to five-year graduate program at a dental school accredited by the American Dental Association (ADA). After dental school, at least two or three academic years of advanced specialty education in an ADA-accredited orthodontic program are required to be an orthodontist. The program includes advanced education in biomedical, behavioral and basic sciences. The orthodontic student learns the complex skills required to manage tooth movement (orthodontics) and guide facial development (dentofacial orthopedics).

Only dentists who have successfully completed these advanced specialty education programs may call themselves orthodontists.



To Get The Best Results, Wear Your Headgear As Instructed.

About the AAO:

For a Smile that's Good for Life:

Founded in 1900, the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) has more than 14,600 members. Active AAO members limit their practices to the dental specialty of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics. Orthodontists are dental specialists with at least two years of advanced orthodontic education after dental school.

The purposes of the American Association of Orthodontists and its member orthodontists are:

- to advance the art and science of orthodontics;*
- to encourage and sponsor research;*
- to strive for and maintain the highest standards of excellence in orthodontic education and practice;*
- and to make significant contributions to the health of the public.*

- Follow the American Dental Association's recommendation and start dental visits by your child's first birthday.
- Make regular visits to your dentist at least every six months.
- Take your child for an orthodontic check-up no later than age 7. If a problem is detected, your orthodontist can determine the best time to start treatment.
- Get your child an orthodontic check-up even if he or she is past age 7. Although an early check-up can be extremely beneficial, the fact is that most orthodontic patients begin active treatment between ages 9 and 14.
- Keep in mind that orthodontic treatment can also benefit adults. Less visible, more comfortable braces make treatment more appealing than ever, and healthy teeth, bones and gums of almost any age respond well to treatment.
- Choose an orthodontist – the dental specialist who is uniquely qualified to treat orthodontic problems.
- Take advantage of the affordability of orthodontic treatment today. Most orthodontists have a variety of convenient payment plans.
- Remember that successful orthodontic treatment is the result of a partnership. The orthodontist, family dentist and, *especially*, a cooperative patient all work together to create a healthy, beautiful smile that's good for life.

To find an orthodontist in your area, ask your family dentist.

Or call the American Association of Orthodontists at 1-800-STRAIGHT or visit our Web site at www.braces.org.

The U.S. and Canadian members of the American Association of Orthodontists wish you and your family good dental health.

Please note: The 1-800-STRAIGHT toll-free number works for calls from the United States AND Canada.

