

Lake Norman's Orthodontics Professional

Parents shouldn't wait until baby teeth have all fallen out before thinking about taking their child to the orthodontist.

Dr. Robert M. Selden, III, the orthodontist at Selden Orthodontics – with offices in Huntersville and University area – said age 7 is a good time for children to come in for a well-check visit to make sure teeth are coming in properly and to let parents know of any potential problems. In some cases, treatment may be needed right then, but for the most part, the visits are a way to plan ahead.

“Age 7 is when they are losing their baby teeth and growing adult teeth, and it is a great time to evaluate this process,” Dr. Selden said of the need to check the alignment of the teeth and how the jaw is growing at that time.

His philosophy is only recommending treatments based on what is wrong so as not to waste a parent's time or money. It's why he never charges parents for their child's well-check visit. “There are very specific reasons why I would recommend treatment, but I leave it to the parents to decide what they want to do,” he said. “There is no pressure. (The well-checks) give them a sense of what is going on with the child and when would be the appropriate time to do something.”

After the initial check, Dr. Selden typically recommends follow-up visits every six months to a year. Appointments are usually not longer than 15-20 minutes and include getting an updated



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X-ray, checking growth progress, evaluating the dental development and speaking with the parent. If something is happening that requires treatment, Dr. Selden said it's important that orthodontists fix the problem in a timely manner so it doesn't cause further – more complicated – issues later.

Among the concerns he sees are not enough space for adult teeth to come in, the upper jaw being too narrow, an underbite or the teeth sticking out too far.

“There is a window of opportunity to widen (the jaw) or do an orthopedic change,” he said. “You don't want to miss that opportunity.”

More often than not, early orthodontic treatment can be accomplished in a year or less and will facilitate or maybe eliminate the need for comprehensive treatment in the future.

For those who didn't get orthodontic care as a teen or young adult, it's not too late.

Dr. Selden said about 25 percent of his clients are adults who are coming in and wanting treatment they weren't able to get before.

Regardless of the age of the client, Dr. Selden said orthodontists should be transparent about what is happening and the course of action.

“I want them to know exactly what's going on,” he said. “It's no Wizard of Oz with smoke and mirrors. I want them to participate in the care of their children.”