

Mississauga Dental Specialists

Braces Invisalign Teeth Gums & Implants

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Orthodontic Dictionary – Common Terms

The following are the most commonly used terms in orthodontics. If you have any questions about orthodontics or would like to schedule an appointment, please contact our office.

Anterior Teeth: The upper and lower six front teeth on each arch.

Appliance: Any orthodontic device which moves or retains teeth. Appliances may also alter the positioning of the jaw.

Arch: The entire upper or lower jaw.

Archwire: The metal wire that connects orthodontic brackets. This wire guides the teeth into their new alignment.

Band with bracket: Metal bands (rings) that are generally cemented around the back teeth.

Braces: Fixed orthodontic appliances designed to align teeth.

Brackets: The tiny metal, ceramic or clear brackets that are affixed to each individual tooth on the arch.

Brushing: This is a crucial part of home dental care. Orthodontists recommend those wearing braces to brush after every meal and snack to eliminate bacteria and plaque.

Buccal: The outer (cheek) side of posterior teeth in the lower and upper arches.

Cephalometric Radiograph: A side X-ray of the face and head used to show growth and development.

Chain: Elastics connected together and placed around the brackets to stabilize the archwire and gently close spaces.

Class I Malocclusion: Molars are correctly aligned, but there is an anterior/posterior cross-bite, an open-bite or overcrowding on the arches.

Class II Malocclusion: Also known as an overbite. The upper front teeth are positioned further forward than the lower teeth.

Class III Malocclusion: Also known as an under-bite. The lower front teeth are positioned further forward than the upper front teeth.

Closed Bite: The upper front teeth completely overlap the bottom teeth causing a deep overbite.

Congenitally Missing Teeth: Some permanent teeth fail to develop and erupt due to genetic factors.

Crossbite: A malocclusion in which the upper back teeth bite inside or outside the lower back teeth, or the lower front teeth bite in front of the upper front teeth.

De-banding: The removal of orthodontic bands from the teeth.

De-bonding: The removal of affixed orthodontic brackets from the teeth.

Diagnostic Records: Records used to assess, plan and implement treatments. These records usually include medical and dental history, radiographs, panoramic radiographs, bite molds and intraoral/extraoral photographs.

Digital Radiograph: Digital X-rays of the teeth which can be viewed, stored, and transmitted via computer.

Elastics: Some braces may require that elastic rubber bands be attached to exert additional pressure to an individual tooth or a group of teeth.

Eruption: The way in which teeth surface through the gums inside the mouth.

Fixed Orthodontic Appliances: Orthodontic appliances which are affixed to the teeth by the orthodontist and cannot be removed by the patient.

Flossing: An essential part of home care that removes debris and plaque from above and below the gum line.

Functional Appliances: Orthodontic appliances that use the muscle movement created by swallowing, eating and speaking to gently move and align the teeth and jaws.

Gingiva: The gums and soft tissue around the teeth.

Headgear: A removable appliance comprised of a brace and external archwire. This device modifies growth and promotes tooth movement.

Impressions: Teeth impressions are taken to allow the orthodontist to see exactly how a patient's teeth fit together.

Interceptive Treatment: Treatment performed on children who have a mixture of adult and baby teeth. Early treatment can help reduce the need for major orthodontic treatment in the future.

Invisalign®: A newer, removable type of dental aligner that is completely transparent and doesn't interfere with eating because it's removable. Not all patients are candidates for Invisalign®.

Ligating Modules: An elastic donut-shaped ring which helps secure the archwire to the bracket.

Ligation: Securing the archwire to the brackets.

Lingual Side: The side of the teeth (in both arches) that is closest to the tongue.

Malocclusion: Literally means “bad bite” in Latin, and refers to teeth that do not fit together correctly.

Mandible: The lower jaw.

Maxilla: The upper jaw.

Mouth Guard: A removable plastic or rubber device that protects teeth and braces from sporting injuries.

Open Bite: Upper and lower teeth fail to make contact with each other. This malocclusion is generally classified as anterior or posterior.

Orthodontics: The unique branch of dentistry concerned with diagnosing, preventing and correcting malocclusions and jaw irregularities.

Orthodontist: A dental specialist who prevents, diagnoses and treats jaw irregularities and malocclusions. Orthodontists must complete two or three additional years of college after dental school and complete a residency program.

Palatal Expander: A removable or fixed device designed to expand the palate in order create room on either the upper or lower arch.

Panoramic Radiograph: An extraoral (external) X-ray that shows the teeth and jaws.

Plaque: The sticky film of saliva, food particles and bacteria that contributes to gum disease and tooth decay.

Posterior Teeth: Back teeth.

Removable Appliance: An orthodontic brace or device that can be removed at will by the patient. It must be worn for the designated amount of time each day to be effective.

Separators: A wire loop or elastic ring placed between the teeth to create room for the subsequent placement of bands or orthodontic appliance.

Space Maintainer: A fixed appliance used to hold space for permanent (adult) tooth. This is usually used when a baby tooth has been lost earlier than anticipated.

Wax: Orthodontic relief wax is a home care remedy used to alleviate irritations caused by braces.

Wires: Attached to the brackets to gently move the teeth into proper alignment.