



EARLY DETECTION IS BEST WHEN IT COMES TO ORAL HEALTH

by Theresa Stratford

A common misconception is that orthodontic care is not necessary at a young age.

“Not true,” said Dr. Kathryn Stroud Bullwinkel, a doctor at Summerville Pediatric Dentistry and Orthodontics. “If you don’t seek treatment early, you could lose the opportunity to easily and effectively fix a problem. When you are young, you are moldable and you can fix a growth-related problem – hopefully without additional procedures in the future.”

Dr. Bullwinkel said there are a few things that are best treated between the ages of 7 and 9. In some cases, early treatment can prevent issues from becoming more complex and make future comprehensive treatment more effective, efficient and predictable.

The early phase of treatment is completed during the transitional dentition, meaning only when the permanent molars and incisors are in the mouth. A later phase occurs once the rest of the permanent teeth are in to tidy things up.

For most children, these early phases improve aesthetics while they are in elementary and early middle school, but they also help address specific issues that can’t be addressed well into the teenage years.

Issues that benefit from early detection are crossed bites in the front or side, early severe crowding or severely blocked teeth.

“Because the top jaw, also called the maxilla, is still developing between the ages of 7 and 9, we are able to easily and painlessly influence the growth direction and position of the jaws,” Dr. Bullwinkel said. “Even in patients as young teenagers, some of these important movements are not easily accomplished.”

The professionals at Summerville Pediatric Dentistry and Orthodontics strive to earn the trust of each individual child.

“We are the first all-female pediatric practice, so we are very nurturing and can really get on the children’s level,” she said. “We want to make coming to our office fun. Most kids come to our practice very nervous for the first time, and, by their second visit, they are running in wanting to hug all of our team members.”

While Dr. Bullwinkel is very conservative with recommending early treatment, it may be the best option for your child to achieve their best smile and perhaps even avoid costly surgical procedures in the future.

“More than anything, we put the needs and health of the children first,” she said. “We will adapt our treatment plan to fit the needs of every child and not adapt a child to the treatment plan. This is very important when working with children.”

To make children feel more comfortable, the staff gives each new patient a tour of the office and introduces them to the whole team. They also give the patient complimentary radiographs. Parents get to meet with Dr. Bullwinkel individually so they can come up with a care plan that best suits them.

**For more information on Summerville Pediatric
Dentistry and Orthodontics,
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