

Orthodontics is a specialty of dentistry focused on treating improper bites, known as malocclusions. They can be a result of crooked teeth, mis-aligned jaws, and other less common reasons. Common treatments include braces, as well as oral surgery to fix jaw and palate alignment problems.

Dental Work

We're just back from the dentist, whom I suppose I should now refer to as the orthodontist. It's ordinarily a pleasant enough place where they go out of the way to make the children comfortable and happy, and neither of my kids ever gives me any trouble about going. That's a good thing, I suppose, since it looks like we'll be going more often.



The orthodontist suggested, if I've gotten this straight: overtime and/or a second job; instant liquidation of any paper assets; a second mortgage; high-interest, unsecured loans; and begging on the streets when family is fully tapped and declines any further pleading. Oh, and at least a weekend in Vegas with a lucky rabbit's foot. If all of that goes smoothly, my son will have a winning smile, she said.

She also, I'm sure, told us all she would actually do to the boy's mouth. There was something about expanding his palate, pulling some recalcitrant baby teeth, putting on the braces, etc. The details, I confess, escape me. I guess I was lost in the forest of mounting debt.

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Of course I want my gorgeous son to have a winning smile. Still, when he popped off a small piece of front tooth this summer, I declined having a custom-fitted veneer put on. He's got years of sports and mouth pieces ahead of him before he even hits puberty. Why drop \$500 on fixing a corner of tooth, when there's every chance he'll have to have it done again, and again, and again-and he really doesn't care? I'm not sure the orthodontist's assistant understood my reasoning at the time. I noticed that raised-eyebrow, 'what kind of low-rent mother are you' sneer when I



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said not to bother. It wasn't enough to guilt me into buying, though, I'm proud to say. We can fix his tooth when he's done with lacrosse; until then, his winning smile will have to be a little less of a jackpot.

Orthodontia these days, however, is not marketed as cosmetic. It seems that without proper expanding and straightening, my son's jaw and teeth could cause him all kinds of problems. His maladjusted mouth will lead to universal maladjustment: from head to neck, spine, hips, legs, etc., he will crumple physically and cognitively all the way to psycho-emotional freakshow.



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And straight teeth are now guaranteed in the U.S. by constitutional amendment, if I'm not mistaken. At least that's the impression I got from the orthodontist. Not straightening his teeth would be comparable to keeping him from school, or even cutting off his ears. I'm not sure what guarantees the money for orthodontia, since so far the U.S. government has been a little slow to earmark dental expenses per family. So, I have to take it all up with the insurance company, apparently, which should be a walk in the park. Insurance companies are always so helpful and forthcoming about this type of thing.

But just in case, I'm booking Vegas next month.