

Seven warning signs in 7-year-olds

An orthodontist answers the following questions when making a first evaluation. These answers are based on visual observation of the mouth and teeth. When you know what to look for, you can answer these questions, too.

1. Do the upper teeth protrude?

Excessive protrusion of the upper front teeth – "buck teeth" – is by far the most common orthodontic problem. You can test this by using the attached Bite Down Early ruler.



2. Is there a deep bite?

The upper front teeth cover the lower front teeth too much.



3. Is there an underbite?

The upper teeth fit inside the arch of the lower teeth.



4. Is there an open bite?

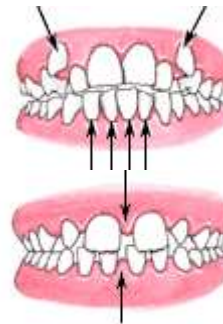
The child can stick his or her tongue between the upper and lower front teeth when the back teeth are together.



5. Is there too little or too much room for the teeth?

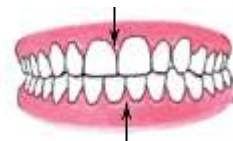
Crowded or overlapped teeth...

...or noticeably large gaps between teeth.



6. Do the front teeth line up?

The spaces between the two upper front teeth and the two lower front teeth should line up with each other and both should line up with the bridge of the nose. When they do not, the probable cause is drifted teeth or a shifted lower jaw, resulting in an improper bite.



7. Is there a crossbite?

The upper back teeth fit inside, rather than outside of the lowers.



Seek treatment *earlier* than age seven if your child has:

- * Difficulty chewing.
- * Open-mouth breathing.
- * thumb or finger sucking.
- * overlapping or crowding of erupting permanent teeth.
- * jaws that click or pop.
- * biting of the cheek or into the roof of the mouth.
- * speech problems.
- * grinding or wearing down of teeth.
- * obvious abnormal bite development of any kind.