

# Orthodontic Care for Children with Craniofacial Differences

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Insurance Questions

#### **Is orthodontic care covered by insurance?**

In the State of Florida, orthodontic care for children with a cleft lip / palate is covered under Florida State Statutes 627.64193 (link:

[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=0600-0699/0627/Sections/0627.64193.html#:~:text=The%202022%20Florida%20Statutes%20\(including,and%202023%20Special%20Session%20B\)&text=627.64193%20Required%20coverage%20for%20cleft,cleft%20palate%20for%20the%20child](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0600-0699/0627/Sections/0627.64193.html#:~:text=The%202022%20Florida%20Statutes%20(including,and%202023%20Special%20Session%20B)&text=627.64193%20Required%20coverage%20for%20cleft,cleft%20palate%20for%20the%20child))

*While most insurance companies will have to abide by state law, there are some instances in which insurance companies do not have to comply (I.e., Federal insurance policies).*

#### **If my insurance does not cover my child's orthodontic care, what are my options?**

Your insurance company may cover all or only some of the cost for your child's orthodontic care. You will be responsible for any portion of the cost of care that is not covered by the insurance company. Many orthodontic providers offer financial assistance.

If your orthodontic care is denied you have the right to request an explanation for the denial. It is important to read your child's dental plan for instructions on when and how to file an appeal. When you file an appeal, it means that your child's case will receive a higher level of review. The appeal process may require additional information or documentation.

The state of Florida also has a program that can help pay for some medically necessary health services for children who do not qualify for Florida Medicaid or KidCare programs. You can apply for the Safety Net program by calling 855-901-5390 or going online [CMSClinicalEligibilityUnit@flhealth.gov](mailto:CMSClinicalEligibilityUnit@flhealth.gov).

#### **How do I find out who my dental insurance provider is?**

If your child has Florida Medicaid or KidCare insurance, you can contact the Medicaid Choice Counseling # (877-711-3662) to request the dental provider information for your child.

*If your child has private insurance, you will need to call your insurance provider or your employer.*

#### **How do I contact my Florida Medicaid dental insurance provider?**

You should have received information on your child's medical plan and dental plan. Insurance cards for these plans may have been mailed to you. The Customer Service number is typically on the back of the card. For additional information, please create an account via [www.myflorida.com/accessflorida](http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida).

#### **Is there any important information that I should make sure my dental insurance provider is aware of?**

It is important that your dental insurance provider is aware of your child's craniofacial diagnosis. Some insurance plans offer dental case managers to help guide you and coordinate your child's dental and orthodontic care. You should contact your dental insurance provider if you wish to request a case manager.

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#### **At what age should my child have the first orthodontic evaluation?**

Children with craniofacial differences should be followed closely by a craniofacial team. The team will usually let you know when your child is ready to have the first orthodontic evaluation. Your child's primary dental provider will also be able to provide information regarding timing for orthodontic treatment. This treatment should always be coordinated with your craniofacial team and/or plastic surgeon.

#### **What are the stages of orthodontic care?**

**Newborn Phase-** A pre-surgical appliance may be used to prepare your child for initial cleft lip repair. NAM (Nasoalveolar Molding) is one of the procedures used prior to surgery. NAM helps reshape the gums, lip, and nostrils with a plastic plate before cleft lip and palate surgery. This requires regular adjustment until the time of initial cleft lip repair. Another appliance that may be used is called the Modified Latham appliance. It uses an elastic power chain that allows rapid closure of the alveolar cleft (cleft in the gum) to decrease the width of the cleft lip prior to surgery.

**Phase 1 or early phase orthodontics** - This type of orthodontic treatment is usually recommended when there are adult and baby teeth present (mixed dentition). Your child's orthodontist may recommend braces on a few upper/lower teeth or an appliance such as a palatal expander, in preparation for alveolar bone grafting. Phase 1 usually requires an examination, dental photos, x-rays, and scans of the teeth. Phase 1 treatment planning requires coordination between the orthodontist and the craniofacial/oral maxillofacial surgeon.

**Phase II or III Teenage years and beyond** - When the child approaches adolescence, orthodontics may be needed again to correct teeth positions and finalize the bite. The orthodontist and the surgeon will coordinate their efforts to align the teeth. In some cases, a combined approach of both orthodontics and surgical repositioning of the jaw (orthognathic surgery) may be necessary. This surgery is usually performed after the pubertal growth spurt is completed.

#### **How long will my child undergo orthodontic treatment?**

The length of orthodontic treatment will depend on your child's individual diagnosis and treatment recommendations from the cleft and craniofacial team. Each state of active orthodontic treatment may be followed by orthodontic retention (i.e. retainers) and regular orthodontic follow up.

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#### **Why is it important to keep my child's teeth clean during orthodontic treatment?**

Brackets and wires work hard to align the teeth, but they do not actually take care of the teeth. In fact, brushing and flossing become even more important when wearing braces to prevent plaque build-up, staining, and decay.

Braces allow small food particles to stay trapped against teeth. As bacteria digest sugars in the food, acids are left behind on teeth. When teeth are not cleaned properly, it can lead to tooth decay, infection, gum disease and/or staining of the teeth from the brackets. A child with poor dental hygiene may not be able to have braces or will have to have them removed which may delay their orthodontic treatment and future surgeries.

Brushing, flossing, and regular dental cleanings are important to the success of your child's orthodontic care. Ask your treating orthodontist or dentist about special brushes and toothbrushes that can help your child dislodge food particles before they have a chance to build-up and turn into plaque.

#### **Why is it important to wear a retainer between phases of orthodontic treatment and after orthodontic treatment?**

After the braces are removed, the bone and soft tissues will need time to adapt to the changes made in the tooth positioning. The retainers help with stabilizing teeth in a new arrangement and ensure that the shifting or relapse of teeth is minimal. You should always wear the retainers per your provider's recommendations.

#### **How do I find a qualified orthodontic provider?**

Due to the complexity of craniofacial care planning, it is best to choose an orthodontist that will collaborate with your craniofacial team and has experience in treating children with craniofacial differences. You can ask for referrals from your craniofacial team and/or contact your insurance for an in-network provider. It is important that the orthodontist that you choose is willing to work with your craniofacial team/plastic surgeon to help plan your child's treatment.

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#### **What questions should I ask my orthodontist?**

- *Do you feel comfortable communicating with my child's craniofacial surgeon and craniofacial team?*
- *How much experience and training do you have treating patients with cleft lip and palate and/or craniofacial differences?*
- *What days and times are your appointments? Do you have after school or weekend appointments?*
- *How often will my child need to be seen?*
- *Who do I contact if I need care after regular office hours?*
- *What are the expectations for my child's oral hygiene?*
- *Do I have to pay for a new retainer if the retainer is lost/broken and how much would that cost?*
- *Do you accept insurance?*
- *Do you offer payment plans and is there interest added if I have a payment plan?*

#### **Who are the specialists who may be involved in the dental/orthodontic care of my child?**

- *Dentist- A health professional who has special training in caring for the teeth, gums, and other tissues in the mouth. This is the person who will clean your child's teeth.*
- *Orthodontist- A dentist who has special training in preventing, diagnosing, and treating certain problems of the teeth and jaw, such as crooked or crowded teeth and bite problems. An orthodontist uses braces, aligners, retainers, headgear, and other devices to help straighten teeth, hold teeth in place, and improve bite.*
- *Oral Surgeon/Craniofacial Surgeon- A professional with specialized training in surgery of the mouth or jaw.*
- *Prosthodontist - Prosthodontics is a specialized branch of dentistry dedicated to making dental prosthetics (artificial teeth) for damaged or missing teeth.*
- *Periodontist - A periodontist is a gum specialist. They focus on treating conditions that affect the tissues that support your teeth (such as your gums and jawbone).*
- *Endodontist - An endodontist is a dental specialist who focuses on complex tooth problems that primarily affect tooth pulp. Tooth "pulp" is what dental providers call the nerves, blood vessels and other tissues deep inside each tooth.*

#### **How do I find a craniofacial/cleft team?**

You can locate a Craniofacial/Cleft Team in your area through the American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association (ACPA) website.

Link: [https://acpacares.org/find-a-care-team/?tax%5Bacpa\\_team%5D%5B0%5D=9A](https://acpacares.org/find-a-care-team/?tax%5Bacpa_team%5D%5B0%5D=9A)