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**FAMILY**  
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## TEETH STRAIGHTENING OPTIONS FOR KIDS



BY DR. **BILL DORFMAN** FEB 2018

DR. BILL DORFMAN OF “EXTREME MAKEOVER” AND “THE DOCTORS” EXPLAINS  
ORTHODONTIC CHOICES TO ACHIEVE A BEAUTIFUL SMILE

### Option #1: Braces

The most conventional option, braces work by putting low level pressure on the teeth over time to achieve proper alignment. Braces made with metal are the most common, but clear and porcelain are also available. If your child is concerned about the look of braces, they can opt for “tooth-colored” wires and brackets to make the braces less noticeable. Traditional braces are usually the most cost-effective method of straightening your child’s teeth, correcting a bite problem, or closing gaps in the teeth. This also the most time-efficient and will correct issues faster than another method, since they are not removable like Invisalign.

#### Option #2: Lingual Braces

Those who dread the look of regular braces might want to try lingual braces, which are placed on the back of the teeth instead of the front. Lingual braces work well with kids who play wind instruments or sports, but they are not a good fit for kids with small teeth or bite problems. They also may cause irritation to your child's tongue and be difficult to keep clean. For those who want their teeth straightened without the braces showing, this would be a good option. The process starts by a dentist taking an impression of your child's teeth. It is then sent to the dental laboratory, where the impression is used to create customized brackets for your child's teeth. This process takes about six weeks. The braces are placed by the orthodontist, who uses a specific process to cement the lingual braces to the back surfaces of the teeth. Like regular braces, this treatment works by applying gentle and continuous pressure on the teeth to help them slowly shift into the correct position. Once the lingual braces are applied, then the actual treatment can take anywhere from 18-36 months, depending on the crowding of the teeth and the size of the child's bite.

#### Option #3: Invisalign

Because they are clear and nearly undetectable, your child might prefer Invisalign braces, which are a type of aligner and are custom-fitted to be worn all day except during meals and snacks. With the advancement of technology, these clear aligners are uniquely designed to treat teeth in order to help reveal the best smile. Since they're clear and not as noticeable as metal braces, children can have better self-esteem, thus leading to a better overall experience when trying to straighten or correct problems in their teeth. With Invisalign, it is easier to keep good oral hygiene, as your child will be able to brush and floss thoroughly when the aligner is removed. However, Invisalign does not work as well for complicated cases, such as kids who need extractions to make room in their mouth or who are missing teeth. The aligner also must be worn properly for best results, which means your child should not be taking them out of his or her mouth for an extended period of time.

#### Option #4: Serial Extraction

Serial extraction is the removal of baby teeth to create room for permanent teeth to grow straight and in the right position. This method prevents overcrowding in the mouth and can sometimes eliminate the need for braces altogether. Patients ages five to seven should be given an x-ray and

analyzed by their dentist to see if they are a proper fit for serial extraction. Although your child may experience discomfort while healing, this can still save your child all of the pain of wearing braces. If a child still needs braces after the extraction, the treatment will still be much easier and shorter than it would have been. Up to four permanent premolars may need to be removed, depending on how crowded your child's teeth may be. For this option, it is best to have your child visit a dentist every three months, so that he or she can keep an eye on when it would be best to do an extraction.

The American Association of Orthodontists advises that your child sees an orthodontist by the time he or she is seven years old. When deciding on a method, always consult your dentist prior to making a decision. Be sure to keep in mind the degree of your child's misalignment, his or her dental history, and his or her age. Some problems can be caught early on and will prevent years of work ahead, but be cautious not to rush into anything too soon, as you don't want your child to repeat the same dental work in the future.

*Courtesy of celebrity cosmetic dentist Dr. Bill Dorfman, who has perfected the smiles of A-list stars such as Mark Wahlberg, Sir Anthony Hopkins, Hugh Jackman, Eva Longoria, Jessica Simpson, and Usher. He is most recognized from the ABC hit show "Extreme Makeover" and the Emmy-winning daytime talk show "The Doctors." Also known as 'America's Dentist,' Dr. Dorfman is the New York Times Best-Selling Author of Billion Dollar Smile.*

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