

How to Choose an Orthodontist for Braces or Clear Aligners

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Description:

How to Choose an Orthodontist for Braces or Clear Aligners Straightening your teeth is one of the most impactful decisions you can make for both your oral health and your confidence. But with so ma...

Details:

Straightening your teeth is one of the most impactful decisions you can make for both your oral health and your confidence. But with so many options available — from traditional metal braces to clear aligners like Invisalign — and so many providers offering orthodontic treatment, choosing the right professional can feel overwhelming. Should you see a specialist orthodontist or a general dentist with orthodontic training? What questions should you ask? And how do you know whether braces or aligners are the better option for your situation?

This guide breaks down the key factors to consider when choosing an orthodontist or orthodontic provider in Melbourne, so you can make a confident, well-informed decision.

Understanding the Difference: Specialist Orthodontist vs General Dentist

One of the first decisions you will face is whether to see a specialist orthodontist or a general dentist who offers orthodontic treatment. Understanding the difference is important.

Specialist Orthodontists

A specialist orthodontist has completed a dental degree followed by an additional two to three years of full-time, university-based specialist training in orthodontics. They are registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) as a specialist in orthodontics, which means they have met rigorous additional standards beyond general dental registration. You can verify any specialist's registration on the AHPRA website.

Specialist orthodontists focus exclusively on diagnosing, preventing, and treating dental and facial irregularities. They handle the most complex cases — including severe crowding, significant bite problems (overbites, underbites, crossbites), jaw alignment issues, and cases requiring surgical orthodontics.

At Core Dental, Dr David Austin is an AHPRA-registered specialist orthodontist practising at the Caroline Springs and Wyndham locations. Dr Austin graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Dental Science before completing specialist orthodontic training at the University of Hong Kong. He was subsequently inducted as a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh (Orthodontics) — one of the world's most prestigious dental colleges. He is also a member of the World Federation of Orthodontists, the European Orthodontic Society, and the Australian Dental Association.

General Dentists with Orthodontic Training

Many general dentists undertake additional training in orthodontic treatment, particularly in clear aligner systems like Invisalign. While they are not registered as specialist orthodontists, they can be highly

skilled at treating mild to moderate alignment issues. For straightforward cases — minor crowding, spacing, or cosmetic alignment — a well-trained general dentist may be an excellent and convenient option.

At Core Dental, several general dentists have significant orthodontic experience. Dr Anna Lai at Carrum Downs has completed a Mini Masters in Orthodontics and is pursuing a two-year Fellowship in Restorative Dentistry. Dr Darren Manoharan at Wyndham has a specialisation in cosmetic and orthodontic dentistry. Dr Sherin Gad at Caroline Springs has a focus on orthodontic treatment, and Dr Anchal Verma at Southbank is experienced in Invisalign, composite bonding, and veneers. Dr Alysha Soltys at Epping and Dr Jacalyn Madden at Southbank are also trained in Invisalign clear aligners.

Which Should You Choose?

As a general guideline: if your case involves significant bite correction, jaw alignment, or complex tooth movement, a specialist orthodontist is the safer choice. For mild to moderate cosmetic alignment, a general dentist with proper training can deliver excellent results — often with the added convenience of being at your regular dental practice.

Braces vs Clear Aligners: What You Need to Know

Traditional Braces

Traditional braces use brackets bonded to the teeth and connected by wires that are periodically tightened to move teeth into position. They are highly effective for complex cases and give the orthodontist precise control over tooth movement.

****Best for:**** Severe crowding, significant bite problems, rotated teeth, cases requiring extraction, younger patients who may not be disciplined enough to wear removable aligners consistently.

Clear Aligners (Including Invisalign)

Clear aligners are a series of custom-made, removable plastic trays that gradually shift your teeth. They are nearly invisible when worn and can be removed for eating, brushing, and flossing. Invisalign is the most well-known brand, but several other systems exist.

****Best for:**** Mild to moderate crowding, spacing issues, cosmetic alignment, adults and teens who want a discreet option, patients who are disciplined about wearing them 20–22 hours per day.

At Core Dental Caroline Springs, digital smile preview software lets you see what your new smile could look like before committing to treatment. The practice also offers Invisalign Teen with compliance indicators that show whether the aligners are being worn enough, plus replacement aligners for active teenagers.

Core Dental Epping notes that clear aligners are removable, which makes them ideal for athletes who need to wear mouthguards during sport — an important consideration for Melbourne's sport-loving families.

Questions to Ask Your Provider

When evaluating an orthodontic provider, these questions can help you assess their suitability:

1. ****Are you a registered specialist orthodontist, or a general dentist with orthodontic training?**** Both can be appropriate depending on your case, but you should know the distinction.
2. ****How many orthodontic cases have you treated?**** Experience matters. Ask about cases similar to yours.
3. ****What technology do you use for treatment planning?**** Digital scanning, 3D imaging, and computer-aided treatment planning typically lead to more precise outcomes.
4. ****Can I see before-and-after photos of similar cases?**** Reputable providers should be willing to share examples (with patient consent).
5. ****What happens if I am not happy with the results?**** Understand the refinement process and any

guarantees or inclusions. 6. ****What is the total cost, and what payment options are available?**** Ensure the quote covers everything — retainers, follow-up visits, and refinement aligners.

Key Factors When Choosing an Orthodontic Provider

1. Assess the Complexity of Your Case

The most important factor is matching your case complexity to the right provider. A consultation is the best way to determine this. During a consultation, a good orthodontic provider will take detailed scans or X-rays, examine your bite and alignment, and explain the treatment options available for your specific situation.

Core Dental offers comprehensive consultations that include digital X-rays, intraoral photographs, and a personalised treatment plan with anticipated costs — there are no hidden fees. At locations with advanced technology like Caroline Springs and Epping, digital scanning means no uncomfortable physical impressions, which is particularly appreciated by patients who find traditional moulds uncomfortable.

2. Consider Location and Convenience

Orthodontic treatment typically involves regular appointments over 12 to 24 months. Choosing a provider that is convenient to your home, work, or school makes it far more likely that you will attend all your appointments on time.

Core Dental has seven locations across Melbourne — in Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, and Berwick — meaning there is likely a practice within easy reach no matter where you live. All locations have free or convenient parking, and several are close to public transport. Being part of the Smile Solutions Group means patients benefit from the quality assurance and shared clinical leadership of one of Australia's largest dental groups.

3. Evaluate Technology and Equipment

Modern orthodontic treatment relies heavily on technology. Digital scanning eliminates uncomfortable impressions. 3D imaging allows for precise treatment planning. CEREC and CAD/CAM technology enables same-day restorations when needed. Look for practices that invest in current technology — it generally means more comfortable treatment and better outcomes.

Core Dental Caroline Springs features digital scanning, 3D imaging, and CEREC technology. Core Dental Epping is the group's technology showcase, with CEREC same-day crowns, digital scanning, and laser dentistry.

4. Look for a Team Approach

Orthodontic treatment does not exist in isolation. Your overall dental health — including gum health, decay, and any existing restorations — needs to be considered as part of your orthodontic plan. Choosing a practice that offers both orthodontic and general dental care under one roof means your treatment can be coordinated seamlessly.

Core Dental's team includes general dentists, dental hygienists and therapists, and board-registered specialists. At Wyndham, for example, you can access a specialist orthodontist (Dr David Austin), a specialist periodontist (Dr Nupur Kataria), general dentists, and dental hygienist Alexis Martinez — all in one location. If gum health needs attention before or during orthodontic treatment, it can be managed within the same practice.

5. Understand the Full Cost and Payment Options

Orthodontic treatment is a significant investment, and understanding the full cost upfront is essential. Be wary of providers who quote a low initial price but add fees for consultations, retainers, refinements, or follow-up visits later.

Ask for a comprehensive, written treatment plan that includes all costs. Core Dental provides written treatment plans with upfront pricing and no hidden fees. All locations offer interest-free payment plans through Payright (from \$1,000 to \$20,000 over 3 to 30 months), making treatment more accessible. HICAPS is on-site at every location for instant health fund claims, and the Child Dental Benefits Schedule covers eligible children aged 2 to 17 for certain dental services.

6. Check for Specialist and Multidisciplinary Access

For complex cases, having access to specialists within the same practice is a significant advantage. If your orthodontist identifies that you need periodontal treatment, a surgical extraction, or paediatric-specific care, being able to refer within the same practice saves time, avoids duplication, and keeps your care coordinated.

Core Dental's specialist team includes Dr David Austin (specialist orthodontist at Caroline Springs and Wyndham), Dr Nupur Kataria (specialist periodontist at Wyndham), and specialist paediatric dentists Dr Angel Babu (Caroline Springs and Carrum Downs), Dr Sarah Scott (Berwick), and Dr Aish Kesava (Epping). This multidisciplinary model means patients rarely need to travel elsewhere for specialist care.

7. Consider the Experience for Children and Teens

If you are choosing orthodontic treatment for a child or teenager, the provider's experience with younger patients is crucial. Adolescents have different needs — including compliance management, growth considerations, and the psychological impact of wearing braces during formative years.

Core Dental's specialist paediatric dentists work alongside general dentists and orthodontic providers to ensure younger patients receive age-appropriate care. Dr Angel Babu at Caroline Springs and Carrum Downs specialises in behaviour management and dental care for children from birth to 18 years. The Invisalign Teen system available at Caroline Springs includes compliance indicators and replacement aligners, which are practical features for busy teenage lives.

Red Flags to Watch For

- ****Pressure to start immediately.**** A reputable provider will give you time to consider your options and will not pressure you into signing up on the spot. - ****No diagnostic records taken.**** Quality orthodontic treatment requires X-rays, scans, or impressions before a treatment plan is proposed. If a provider recommends treatment without thorough diagnostics, be cautious. - ****Vague pricing.**** If you cannot get a clear, written quote that includes all components of treatment, look elsewhere. - ****No mention of retainers.**** Retainers are essential for maintaining results after braces or aligners. If the provider does not discuss retention as part of the treatment plan, that is a concern. - ****Claims that aligners can fix everything.**** While clear aligners are versatile, they have limitations. A provider who claims aligners can treat any case may be overpromising.

Your Orthodontic Checklist

- ■ Have you determined whether you need a specialist orthodontist or a general dentist with orthodontic training? - ■ Has a thorough diagnostic assessment (X-rays, scans, photos) been completed? - ■ Have both braces and aligner options been discussed and compared for your case? - ■ Is the provider AHPRA-registered (and specialist-registered, if applicable)? - ■ Have you received a written, all-inclusive cost estimate? - ■ Are flexible payment plans available? - ■ Is the practice conveniently located for regular appointments? - ■ Does the practice offer multidisciplinary care (general, specialist, hygiene)? - ■ Has a retention plan been discussed? - ■ Do you feel comfortable with the provider and confident in their recommendations?

Ready to Explore Your Options?

Whether you are considering braces, clear aligners, or simply want a professional assessment of your alignment, the first step is a consultation. Core Dental's seven Melbourne locations offer comprehensive orthodontic consultations with experienced clinicians who will take the time to understand your goals, explain your options, and provide a transparent, written treatment plan.

Part of the Smile Solutions Group, Core Dental combines suburban convenience with specialist-level expertise — so you can access high-quality orthodontic care close to home.

****Book your orthodontic consultation online at coredental.com.au or call 13 13 16.****