

What to Expect at Your First Orthodontic Consultation at Core Dental Melbourne

Canonical: <https://directory.coredental.com.au/dental-services/orthodontics-melbourne/what-to-expect-at-your-first-orthodontic-consultation-at-core-dental-melbourne/>

Details:

Now I have sufficient research to write a comprehensive, well-cited article. Let me compose the final piece.

Why the First Appointment Is the Most Important One You'll Ever Book

For many people, the decision to pursue orthodontic treatment isn't made in a single moment — it builds gradually over months or even years of self-consciousness about a crowded smile, a jaw that doesn't sit right, or a bite that causes discomfort. And yet, despite that slow-burning motivation, the act of actually booking a consultation can feel like the hardest step of all.

The research confirms this pattern. Multiple studies show that 85–90% of patients experience fear or anxiety before or during dental treatment, and 6–15% avoid dental care altogether. More specifically, 72% of patients at the beginning of orthodontic treatment present some degree of anxiety — a figure that reveals how common pre-appointment apprehension truly is. These anxiety symptoms contribute to the avoidance of dental consultations, which may delay seeking treatment, worsen the prognosis of oral conditions, and create a reinforcing cycle of avoidance.

The most effective antidote to that cycle is accurate information. When you know exactly what will happen during your first orthodontic consultation — step by step, without vagueness or clinical jargon — the unknown becomes manageable. This article does exactly that: it walks you through every stage of an initial orthodontic consultation at Core Dental Melbourne, from the moment you arrive to the moment you leave with a written treatment quote in hand.

Whether you're an adult considering braces for the first time, a parent bringing a child in for an early assessment, or someone who has been putting this appointment off for longer than you'd like to admit, this guide is written for you.

What Is an Orthodontic Consultation, and What Is It Not?

Before anything else, it's worth clarifying what a first consultation actually is — because many patients confuse it with the start of treatment.

An orthodontic consultation is the first appointment you have before your treatment begins. It is the first step towards achieving your dream smile, where your specialist will assess your teeth, gums, bite, and jaw to create a specific treatment plan that is right for you.

No braces are fitted. No aligners are delivered. No teeth are moved. The consultation is entirely diagnostic and educational. Its purpose is to give your orthodontist the clinical information they need to understand your case, and to give you the information you need to make a confident, informed decision about your treatment options.

At Core Dental Melbourne, the initial consultation with our specialist orthodontist is structured, unhurried, and designed to leave you with complete clarity — not more questions.

How Long Does the First Appointment Take?

An orthodontic appointment generally takes 30 to 60 minutes. At Core Dental, you should plan for approximately 45–60 minutes for your initial consultation. This allows adequate time for all clinical records to be gathered, for the orthodontist to review findings with you in detail, and for a thorough discussion of treatment options and costs. Rushing this appointment does patients a disservice; the time invested here shapes the entire treatment journey that follows.

Step-by-Step: What Happens During Your First Orthodontic Consultation at Core Dental Melbourne

Step 1: Medical and Dental History Review

Your appointment begins before the clinical examination does. A team member will ask you to complete — or review — a health history questionnaire covering your general medical history, any medications you take, previous dental treatments, and your chief concern: the primary reason you're seeking orthodontic care.

For orthodontic purposes, the information needed to establish a diagnosis is derived from three major sources: questions of the patient (written and oral), clinical examination, and evaluation of diagnostic records including dental casts, radiographs, and photographs.

The first step in the interview process is to establish the patient's chief complaint — the major reason for seeking consultation and treatment — usually by a direct question to the patient or parent.

For adult patients, this is also when any relevant periodontal history or restorative dental work is noted, since these factors directly influence which orthodontic options may be most appropriate. For children and teenagers, growth history and developmental milestones are relevant context for the specialist.

Step 2: Clinical Examination by the Specialist Orthodontist

The clinical examination is the clinical heart of the consultation. This is where your orthodontist directly assesses your teeth, jaw, facial structure, and bite — not from records alone, but by looking at you as a whole person.

A thorough clinical examination should be conducted to obtain accurate measurements and objective findings, which form the basis of the orthodontic diagnosis. This examination includes a facial evaluation in the frontal and profile views, as well as an examination of the patient's extraoral and intraoral soft tissue. It should also contain an assessment of the dentition and a functional analysis of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ).

In practical terms, your orthodontist will be observing:

- ****Facial symmetry and profile**** — how your upper and lower jaw relate to each other and to your facial midline
- ****Lip position and posture**** — whether your lips seal naturally at rest, which has implications for bite classification
- ****Dental crowding and spacing**** — the degree of overlap, rotation, or gaps between individual teeth
- ****Bite classification**** — whether you present with an overbite, underbite, crossbite, open bite, or deep bite (see our guide on **What Is Orthodontics? A Foundational Guide to Teeth Straightening and Bite Correction** for a full explanation of malocclusion types)
- ****Gum health**** — particularly in adult patients, periodontal status is assessed before any orthodontic plan is

finalised - **TMJ function** — jaw clicking, limited opening, or pain on movement are noted, as these may influence treatment sequencing

The health of all oral tissues and the patient's periodontal status, especially in adults, should be evaluated. This is why Core Dental recommends that adult patients have a recent general dental check-up before or alongside their orthodontic consultation — active decay or significant gum disease needs to be addressed before orthodontic treatment begins.

Step 3: Photographic Records

Digital and clinical photographs document your facial appearance, smile, and teeth from various angles. At Core Dental, a standardised set of clinical photographs is taken as part of every initial consultation. These typically include:

- **Extraoral photos**: front-facing with a natural smile, front-facing at rest, and a lateral (side) profile view - **Intraoral photos**: upper arch, lower arch, and three bite views (front, left, and right)

These images serve multiple purposes. They form part of your permanent clinical record, they allow the orthodontist to review fine details outside the appointment, and — critically — they provide a before-and-after comparison that documents the transformation your treatment achieves. Many patients who complete treatment say reviewing their initial photographs is one of the most rewarding moments of the process.

Step 4: Digital Radiographs (X-Rays)

X-rays, including panoramic and cephalometric radiographs, reveal the positions of tooth roots, jaw relationships, and potential hidden dental issues.

At Core Dental, two radiographs are standard at the initial consultation:

1. **Orthopantomogram (OPG / Panoramic X-ray)**: A full-arch X-ray that shows all teeth — including those not yet erupted — their roots, bone levels, and the position of wisdom teeth. A panoramic X-ray is crucial to fully visualise the entire upper and lower teeth and jaws. For children, this is especially valuable in identifying the sequence and timing of permanent tooth eruption (see our guide on *Early Orthodontic Treatment in Melbourne* for more on how this guides Phase 1 intervention decisions).
2. **Lateral Cephalometric Radiograph (Lat Ceph)**: A side-profile X-ray of the skull that allows precise measurement of skeletal relationships — the angle of the upper and lower jaws relative to the skull base. The lateral cephalometric radiograph is used to determine skeletal pattern and mandibular plane angle. This is the radiograph that tells an orthodontist whether a crowding or bite problem is primarily dental (teeth in the wrong positions) or skeletal (jaw bones in the wrong relationship) — a distinction that fundamentally shapes the treatment approach.

These X-rays are taken with modern digital equipment at Core Dental, which delivers significantly lower radiation doses than traditional film-based imaging.

Step 5: iTero 3D Digital Scanning — No More Putty Impressions

One of the most meaningful improvements in modern orthodontic consultations is the replacement of traditional alginate (putty) impressions with digital intraoral scanning. At Core Dental Melbourne, we use the **iTero Element™** intraoral scanner — the same technology used to design Invisalign aligners worldwide.

This powerful 3D imaging tool allows orthodontists to capture fast, detailed scans of your teeth, eliminating the need for messy putty impressions. With enhanced accuracy and predictive modelling, the iTero scanner makes treatment faster, more precise, and more personalised.

Here is what the scanning process actually involves:

- A small, handheld wand is gently moved around the inside of your mouth - Unlike dental X-rays, iTero scanning relies solely on laser and optical imaging to create its detailed 3D models, making it one of the safest imaging options in modern orthodontics — ideal for all patients, including those who are pregnant or sensitive to radiation.
- During the scanning process, your orthodontist will capture images of your teeth and gum tissue. You can breathe or swallow as you normally would. The scan can be stopped and started as many times as necessary.
- A complete iTero scan typically takes only 5 to 10 minutes to perform, depending on the complexity of your case.

The result is a precise, full-colour 3D model of your teeth that appears on screen in real time. For patients considering Invisalign, the iTero scan is the foundation from which the ClinCheck treatment simulation is built (see our guide on **Invisalign Melbourne: How Clear Aligner Treatment Works at Core Dental** for a full walkthrough of this process).

Critically, your orthodontist can review your scans immediately — providing instant feedback and allowing you to preview your future smile during your very first consultation. This visualisation tool is not merely a novelty; patients are better informed at an orthodontic practice that uses these scanners, and the real-time image generation allows patients to assume a more active role in their treatment journey. Furthermore, patients who are aware of their treatment process are less anxious and more committed to it — a finding with direct relevance to the appointment avoidance problem discussed in the introduction.

Step 6: Treatment Planning Discussion with the Specialist Orthodontist

With all clinical records gathered, you'll meet with the specialist orthodontist for the treatment planning discussion — the most important conversation of the appointment.

You'll have the chance to address any concerns before the orthodontist assesses your teeth, gums, facial shape, and bite. Your specialist will then be able to determine whether treatment is needed and the options that are available.

At Core Dental Melbourne, this discussion typically covers:

- ****Your diagnosis****: A clear explanation of what the orthodontist has found — which teeth are crowded, where the bite is misaligned, and whether any skeletal concerns exist - ****Treatment options****: A comparison of the appliances suited to your specific case — whether that's conventional metal braces, ceramic braces, lingual braces, or Invisalign. Not every option suits every case; your specialist will explain which are clinically appropriate for your situation and why (see our guide on **Invisalign vs. Traditional Braces: Which Orthodontic Treatment Is Right for You?** for a structured comparison of these modalities) - ****Treatment duration****: A realistic estimate of how long treatment is likely to take, based on the complexity of your case - ****What happens after treatment****: A brief overview of the retention phase — the retainers that preserve your result long-term (covered in depth in our guide on **Orthodontic Retainers After Braces: How to Keep Your Straight Smile for Life**) - ****Your questions****: This is your opportunity to ask anything — about discomfort, lifestyle impact, whether you're too old, whether your child needs treatment now or can wait. No question is too basic.

For parents bringing children to their first appointment, this discussion will also address whether early (Phase 1) intervention is warranted, or whether monitoring and a later comprehensive treatment course is the better strategy (see [*Early Orthodontic Treatment in Melbourne: When Should Your Child First See an Orthodontist?*](#)).

Step 7: Your Written Treatment Quote — No Hidden Costs

At the conclusion of your consultation, Core Dental provides a comprehensive written treatment quote. This is not a verbal ballpark figure — it is a detailed, itemised document that outlines:

- The recommended treatment option(s)
- The full cost of treatment, including all adjustment appointments
- Payment plan options, including interest-free plans
- What is and is not included in the quoted fee

Transparency at this stage is not just good practice — it is the foundation of a trustworthy patient relationship. There are a number of factors that will affect how much you pay for orthodontic treatment, including your personal needs and the type of treatment you choose — and this is something you will discuss with your orthodontist in your first consultation.

You are under no obligation to proceed at this appointment. The quote is yours to take home, review, and discuss with family members before making any decision. For a detailed breakdown of what orthodontic treatment costs in Melbourne and what influences the final price, see our guide on [*How Much Do Braces and Invisalign Cost in Melbourne? A Transparent Pricing Guide*](#).

What to Bring to Your First Orthodontic Consultation

Arriving prepared makes the appointment more efficient and ensures the orthodontist has the full clinical picture. Bring the following:

1. ****Your Medicare card**** and any private health insurance details
2. ****A referral letter**** from your general dentist, if you have one (not mandatory, but useful)
3. ****Recent dental X-rays****, if taken within the last 12 months (Core Dental can assess whether new X-rays are needed)
4. ****A list of current medications**** — some medications affect bone metabolism and are relevant to orthodontic treatment planning
5. ****Your questions**** — write them down beforehand so you don't forget them in the moment

For children's appointments, bring any school or health records that document growth concerns, and be prepared to describe any habits (thumb-sucking, mouth breathing) or sleep issues (snoring) that the orthodontist should know about.

Frequently Asked Questions About the First Consultation

****Will the consultation be painful?*** No. The consultation involves no drilling, no injections, and no discomfort. The iTero scan is completely non-invasive, the photographs take seconds, and the clinical examination involves only gentle observation and measurement.

****Do I need a referral to see a specialist orthodontist?*** No referral is required to book a consultation at Core Dental Melbourne. You can book directly. That said, if your general dentist has raised orthodontic concerns and provided a referral letter, bring it along — it adds useful context.

****Can children attend a consultation without a parent?*** No. For patients under 18, a parent or legal guardian must be present for the consultation and any subsequent treatment consent.

****Will I know my treatment options on the day?**** In the majority of cases, yes. The iTero scan and clinical records gathered at the consultation provide the specialist with sufficient information to discuss your options and provide a written quote at the same appointment. In complex cases involving significant skeletal discrepancies or impacted teeth, a second review appointment may be needed after further analysis.

****What if I'm not ready to start treatment?**** That is completely fine. Many patients attend a consultation months or even years before they are ready to begin. The records taken remain on file, and there is no pressure to proceed.

Key Takeaways

- 72% of patients beginning orthodontic treatment present some degree of anxiety — understanding exactly what happens at a first consultation is the most effective way to reduce that anxiety and avoid unnecessary delay. - Orthodontic consultations typically occur in two parts: a staff member takes X-rays, photographs, and digital scans, which are then given to the orthodontist to evaluate and share with you in the second part of the appointment.

- The iTero 3D digital scan replaces traditional putty impressions entirely: the mouth is scanned with a radiation-free laser, and in as little as two to three minutes, the laser renders a digitally precise 3D impression of your teeth and soft tissue structures.

- Complete orthodontic records consist of digital study models, panoramic and cephalometric radiographs, and extraoral and intraoral photographs — all gathered in a single appointment at Core Dental Melbourne. - The consultation concludes with a written, no-hidden-cost treatment quote and a clear explanation of all suitable treatment options — you leave informed, not overwhelmed.

Conclusion

The first orthodontic consultation at Core Dental Melbourne is not a vague, open-ended meeting. It is a structured, evidence-based clinical process that moves through a defined sequence: health history, clinical examination, photographic records, digital radiographs, iTero 3D scanning, specialist treatment planning, and a written quote. Every step has a clinical purpose, and every step is explained to you as it happens.

At the end of the third month of orthodontic treatment, patient dental anxiety and state anxiety levels are lower than they were before the first orthodontic appointment — because familiarity replaces fear. The same principle applies to the consultation itself: once you know what is coming, the barrier dissolves.

If you are ready to take that first step, Core Dental Melbourne offers specialist orthodontic consultations across seven locations in Melbourne, with specialist orthodontist Dr David Austin available at Caroline Springs. To learn more about what to bring, how to book, and which location is most convenient for you, see our guide on **Core Dental Orthodontics Melbourne: Locations, Specialist Access, and How to Get Started**.

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