

Oral health challenges and management strategies for patients undergoing orthodontic treatment

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ABSTRACT

Orthodontic treatment is a complex medical procedure that involves a series of steps aimed at achieving a desired outcome over an extended period, utilizing various types of appliances to correct malocclusion. This review seeks to explore common oral health issues faced by patients undergoing orthodontic treatment and to recommend effective strategies for addressing these problems. To gather relevant information, we conducted a comprehensive literature search across several databases, including PubMed/Medline, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Medscape, Elsevier, ResearchGate, Academia, Intechopen, and Sagepub, retrieving over 120 papers. The inclusion criteria were papers published in English between 2017 and 2021 within the review's subject area. From this pool, 50 papers were selected and thoroughly examined to provide the information presented in this article. The review is structured around orthodontic treatment concepts, types of appliances used to correct malocclusion, and the associated oral health conditions in patients, along with their management strategies. In conclusion, maintaining a high standard of oral hygiene is crucial for all patients undergoing orthodontic treatment. Patients should be educated on proper daily oral hygiene practices and encouraged to attend regular dental check-ups and prophylactic treatments.

INTRODUCTION

Orthodontic treatment is a complicated medical technique that involves a series of steps aimed at reaching a desired result over a long period, considering the application of appliances in different forms or types for the correction of malocclusion. Orthodontic treatment of patients with

malocclusion improves the appearance of the oral and maxillofacial area while also enhancing masticatory performance and function. The purpose of orthodontic treatment is to improve the arrangement of teeth to achieve normal occlusion. Occlusion is the interdigitation of the upper and lower jaw teeth in the oral cavity. It is

essentially an integrated action of the muscles of the jaw, temporomandibular joints, and teeth (Shetty et al., 2019). The misalignment of the upper or lower jaw teeth is described as malocclusion. In most instances, malocclusion and dentofacial deformity are caused not by pathological reactions but by developmental processes. The impact of physical appearance on psychosocial significance is affected by malocclusion, especially in adolescents and young adults (Zou et al., 2018; Ahmed et al., 2021).

The number of individuals with malocclusion and oral conditions necessitating orthodontic treatment has drastically increased. Malocclusion has several negative impacts on the well-being of individuals. A growing number of people seeking orthodontic treatment have oral conditions that infringe on oral health-related quality of life (OHRQoL) (Chen et al., 2018; Elyaskhil et al., 2021; Pereira et al., 2021; Zamora-Martínez et al., 2021). Malocclusion is one of the most common dental problems in adolescents and adults, with a prevalence rate ranging from 20% to 100% (Alvarado et al., 2017; Zou et al., 2018; Perrotta et al., 2019). Orthodontic treatment of patients with malocclusion improves the appearance of the oral and maxillofacial area while also enhancing masticatory performance and function (Bucci et al., 2019; Choi, 2020).

This review aims to study oral health conditions in patients using orthodontic treatment appliances.

SELECTED COMMON ORTHODONTIC PROBLEMS

Some of the factors necessitating the use of an orthodontic appliance include crossbite, open bite, overcrowding, and excessive spacing.

Crossbite

A crossbite is a type of malocclusion/misalignment of teeth that occurs when the maxilla and mandible have a negative transverse disparity in occlusion, with the lower tooth overlapping the upper tooth. It may affect a single tooth or a group of teeth anteriorly or posteriorly, bilaterally or unilaterally. Posterior crossbite is an improper buccal-lingual relationship between premolars and/or molars of the opposing arches in centric occlusion, with prevalence rates ranging from 7.5% to 22%. Anteriorly, it is also known as an underbite, where the lower front teeth overlap the upper anterior teeth

(Leonardi et al., 2018; Alhammadi et al., 2018; Dzingile et al., 2020; Caroccia et al., 2021).

Open Bite

An open bite is a type of malocclusion characterised by the absence of overlap or contact between maxillary and mandibular anterior teeth while the posterior teeth are in centric occlusion. It is the most complicated type of malocclusion, requiring a more complex approach involving skeletal (abnormal facial growth), dental (tooth eruption impediment), and habitual factors, including thumb or pacifier sucking, tongue thrusting, and temporomandibular joint disorder (Bianchi et al., 2017; Tavares & Allgayer, 2019; Laudadio et al., 2021).

Overcrowding

This is the second most common form of malocclusion after open bite (Tran & Picheca, 2017). Dental crowding, also known as swarming, is characterised by an imbalance between the size of the teeth and the dimensions of the arch, leading to malocclusion (Das et al., 2017). Tooth crowding is a frequent condition affecting many children, teens, and adults, necessitating orthodontic treatment as it can lead to health concerns or low self-esteem. Even though misaligned teeth might represent the uniqueness of a person's smile, the decision to fix crooked teeth is a personal one. This is a form of disarrangement of multiple teeth in the oral cavity (Decusara et al., 2019).

Excessive Spacing

Teeth spacing is an oral condition characterised by gaps between several teeth in the oral cavity. When there are unnatural gaps between teeth, this is known as abnormal tooth spacing. Excessive space between teeth can arise from various causes, including unusually small teeth, missing teeth due to congenital abnormalities or injuries, gum tissue abnormalities, or protruded teeth (Majumder et al., 2018; Mohamed et al., 2021). Spaces between teeth can lead to various dental and oral problems, such as eating difficulties, gum overexposure, self-consciousness about facial appearance—especially when smiling—and health-related quality of life issues (Alamri et al., 2019; Almotairy & Almutairi, 2020).

CONCEPT OF ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT APPLIANCE

Orthodontic treatment requires a detailed understanding of craniofacial growth and development. It is a complex medical intervention that involves a series of steps aimed at achieving a desired outcome over an extended period (Tiro, 2017). A shallow understanding of the developmental processes and treatment of the jaw and teeth can make it difficult to comprehend the various disorders, which predominantly affect children and young people.

A knowledge-based approach involving orthodontic appliances helps create and/or transmit forces to individual teeth, groups of teeth, and/or maxillo-facial skeletal units. These forces facilitate changes to correct deviations from an arbitrary norm, aligning teeth or rectifying other irregularities. However, orthodontic devices can cause functional restrictions, discomfort, and pain (Kharalampos et al., 2020).

The primary goals of orthodontic treatment are to improve oral hygiene, achieve functional masticatory efficiency, ensure structural balance, enhance aesthetics, align dentition, and reduce or eliminate occlusal trauma (Rajan et al., 2017; Manoj et al., 2020). Discomfort caused by orthodontic appliances can impact patient compliance with treatment. Moreover, aesthetic concerns are one of the primary reasons for poor cooperation (Erum and Azhar, 2020).

In orthodontics today, several treatment phases address different patient needs:

1. Preventive Orthodontics

This involves preserving the integrity of what is normal for the age through education and monitoring the growth and development of the dentition and craniofacial structures (Xhemnica and Rroço, 2022).

2. Interceptive Orthodontics

This refers to early intervention to eradicate or lessen the severity of a developing malocclusion (Kravitz, 2019).

3. Corrective Orthodontics

This is aimed at addressing fully developed

malocclusions, often requiring more intensive interventions.

4. Surgical Orthodontics

This combines surgical and orthodontic treatments to address severe skeletal issues, such as a cleft palate.

Orthodontic treatment contributes to the long-term health of teeth, gums, and jaws by applying strategic forces to achieve desired changes.

Common Orthodontic Appliances

Orthodontic appliances are devices used to correct and manage malocclusion and other oral health-related conditions. These appliances may be classified as fixed or removable, depending on their intended purpose and the requirements of the treatment plan.

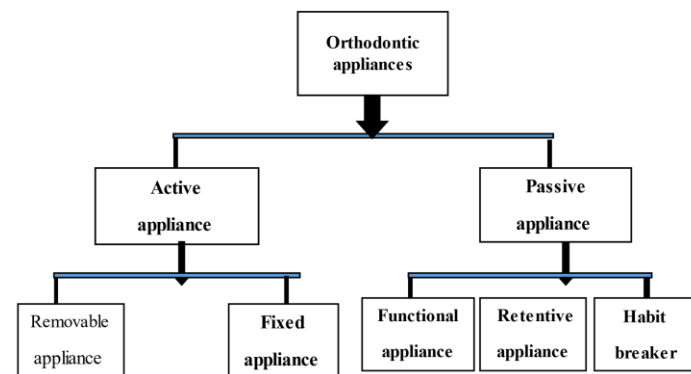
Fixed Orthodontic Appliances

Fixed appliances are non-removable devices attached to teeth to provide continuous orthodontic force for correcting malocclusion. Brackets and bands are examples of fixed orthodontic appliances. Brackets are attached to the surface of each tooth, while bands encircle teeth entirely to provide additional anchorage and support. The wires that connect the brackets are tightened periodically to adjust alignment (Benson et al., 2020).

Removable Orthodontic Appliances

Removable orthodontic appliances are designed to be easily placed and removed by patients. These devices are typically used for minor orthodontic corrections or as a follow-up to fixed appliances. Examples include aligners, retainers, and expansion plates. Aligners, such as Invisalign, are a popular choice among adults due to their discreet appearance and convenience (Kravitz et al., 2019).

Figure 1:
Types of orthodontic treatment appliances



Authors' construct

COMMON ORAL CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

Orthodontic treatment, while beneficial, may lead to various oral conditions or complications if not managed appropriately. These include periodontal issues, enamel demineralisation, and caries.

Periodontal Issues

Patients with orthodontic appliances are at a higher risk of developing periodontal diseases due to difficulty in maintaining oral hygiene. Gingivitis and periodontitis may result from plaque accumulation around orthodontic brackets and wires. Effective oral hygiene practices and regular professional cleanings can mitigate these risks (Sharma et al., 2020).

Enamel Demineralisation

Enamel demineralisation is a common side effect of orthodontic treatment. The areas surrounding brackets and bands are prone to plaque accumulation, which can lead to white spot lesions. These lesions are an early sign of enamel breakdown and may progress to caries if untreated. The use of fluoride treatments and meticulous oral hygiene can help prevent demineralisation (Ogaard, 2018).

Dental Caries

Orthodontic treatment can increase the risk of dental caries due to challenges in maintaining adequate oral hygiene. Plaque and food debris may become trapped around brackets, wires, and other components, creating an environment conducive to bacterial growth. Regular use of fluoride toothpaste and antibacterial mouth rinses is

recommended to prevent caries during orthodontic treatment (Zeigler et al., 2018).

MANAGEMENT OF THE ORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT APPLIANCES

The management of malocclusion-related oral health issues is significantly dependent on the type of malocclusion being treated. The benefits of orthodontic therapy should always outweigh any potential negative consequences. To achieve this balance, it is essential to assess the oral health problems associated with orthodontic treatment (Hajrasi et al., 2020).

In fixed orthodontic treatments, components such as arch wires, headgears, and brackets can cause considerable damage, either during the active treatment phase or during debonding. For this reason, maintaining excellent oral hygiene is crucial before initiating any active orthodontic treatment. Patients must receive proper advice to mitigate potential risks. The success of orthodontic treatment also depends on the patient's personal motivation and cooperation in adhering to prescribed guidelines for appliance use (Peeva, 2017).

For patients using fixed and removable appliances, regular oral hygiene assessments are necessary to support effective treatment planning. The following suggestions are vital for managing oral health during orthodontic therapy:

- Implementation of Psychological and Educational Strategies**
 Assess and use psychological and educational approaches to enhance patient compliance. Provide recommendations and follow-up on strategic cleaning techniques to ensure sustained dental hygiene.
- Dietary and Hygiene Guidance for Children**
 Parents should encourage their children to limit their exposure to harmful diets, such as sugary snacks, and to floss their teeth thoroughly, especially before bedtime.
- Regular Dental Visits**
 Encourage regular dental clinic visits to ensure

adequate plaque removal and monitor oral hygiene progress.

By addressing these considerations, orthodontic treatment can effectively manage malocclusions while minimising oral health issues.

CONCLUSION

Orthodontic treatment plays a critical role in correcting malocclusion and enhancing oral health-related quality of life. However, it is not without potential complications. Awareness of common orthodontic problems, appliances, and associated oral conditions is essential for clinicians and patients to ensure optimal outcomes. Adherence to oral hygiene practices, regular dental visits, and patient education are crucial in mitigating the risks associated with orthodontic appliances.

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