

Transforming Smiles... *Transforming Lives...*



Catch 'em Early with Interceptive Orthodontics!

Funky clothes, video games, and turtles that talk ... childhood is quite different from that of a generation ago.

Tooth-colored fillings, porcelain veneers, teeth implanted into the jaw bone ... dentistry has changed, too. And orthodontics for children is one area that has changed dramatically.

In the past, children with bite problems could count on getting a full set of shiny braces after all their permanent teeth had come in, and perhaps wearing the braces into their late teens as well. Today, however, orthodontic treatment may begin as early as preschool.

Why the change? As general dentistry has become more preventive oriented, so has orthodontia. The key to early orthodontic treatment is *interception*—correcting little problems before they become big problems.

Interceptive orthodontics means that we treat poor tooth positioning when a child's jaw, teeth, and other oral structures are just developing. We use a variety of modern techniques and devices to guide the permanent teeth so they'll come in straight and healthy or to improve the way the jaw is growing.

Young children respond very well to interceptive orthodontics because it:

- is gentler and more comfortable for young patients.
- retains permanent teeth in efforts to correct the bite.
- helps children speak better and eat properly.
- improves balance in facial form.
- prevents potentially serious gum problems.
- reduces the time a child spends in braces; children are often free of braces before they enter high school.

Our role in interceptive orthodontics is to carefully monitor and evaluate your child at every visit. We look for potential bite problems and disturbances in the growth of the jaw. And at the first sign of trouble, we'll start your child in an orthodontic treatment program.

Please call us at **616-455-7930** with any questions or concerns you may have about your child's bite. We'll be happy to set up an evaluation appointment.

Interceptive orthodontics is one of the best investments you can make in your child's future dental health.

The key to early orthodontic treatment is interception—correcting little problems before they become big problems.



Fall 2019

Produced for
the patients of
**Karen O'Rourke,
D.D.S., P.C.**

OFFICE STAFF

Administrative Coordinators:

Shyanne
Rebecca

Clinical Assistants:

Tara
Carrie

Hygienists/

Periodontal Therapists:

Jill
Sheila

OFFICE HOURS

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Friday 7:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

**Appointment and Emergency
Phone: (616) 455-7930**

E-mail:

drkarenorourke@gmail.com

Website:

www.drkorourke.com

FACEBOOK!

Find Karen O'Rourke,
D.D.S., on Facebook, and
[Like] us to stay updated
between newsletters!



Thank you for all your referrals. We appreciate them!



Diabetes Affects Oral Health, Too

Diabetes has become a near-epidemic disease in the United States. Nearly 30 million people have it, and approximately 1.7 million new cases are diagnosed each year.

Diabetes can damage the cardiovascular system, nervous system, kidneys, and vision if not treated and managed properly. It can also interfere with wound healing and raise the risk of infection.

Uncontrolled diabetes is a threat to oral health, too:

- The salivary glands may be hindered by diabetes, affecting saliva production. Your mouth may feel dry (xerostomia) and possibly sore, and your risk of cavities shoots up.
- Deficient, glucose-laden saliva can lead to a fungal infection called thrush. White, rash-like bumps may appear almost anywhere in the mouth or at the back of the throat and produce burning, soreness, or difficulty swallowing.
- Gums are more likely to become inflamed and bleed frequently (gingivitis).
- Diabetics are three to four times as likely to develop periodontal disease as nondiabetics. Periodontal disease attacks gums, ligaments, and the bone in which teeth are anchored. Untreated, it can lead to tooth loss.
- A person's sense of taste might be diminished.

The diabetes–oral health connection is a two-way street. For instance, research has shown that gum disease can interfere with blood-glucose control and may enable diabetes to progress.

If you have diabetes, it's important to keep our office up to date on your condition and treatment; conversely, apprise your physician of your oral condition and treatment.

Controlling diabetes and taking proper care of your teeth and gums are the keys to maintaining good dental, and overall, health. If you have any concerns, please contact our office.

Custom Mouthguards, Kids, and Sports

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sports-related dental injuries account for over 600,000 visits to dental offices and ERs each year across the nation. One factor that can greatly reduce the damage inflicted upon your child's teeth, gums, inner cheeks, tongue, jaw, and jaw joint during sports participation—as well as lower the odds of a concussion—is a custom-made mouthguard.

Mouthguards are mandatory in scholastic football, lacrosse, field hockey, and ice hockey. However, outside of those four sports, 84 percent of athletes play without one, according to an American Association of Orthodontists survey ... and incur 75 percent of sports-related dental injuries. Wearing a custom mouthguard can make a profound difference.

Three types of mouthguards are available:

- **Premade mouthguards** can be found on store shelves. They're inexpensive but offer limited size ranges, are uncomfortable, interfere with breathing and speech, and provide minimal protection.
- **"Boil and bite" mouthguards** incorporate hot water and pressure to mold the mouthguard to the shape of the user's mouth. They're a step up from premades but still fail to provide full protection.
- **Custom-made mouthguards** involve a dentist making detailed impressions of your child's teeth. Durable, high-quality materials will be fitted to those impressions. The result is a superior-quality, comfortable protective device at a reasonable price.

Noncontact-sports enthusiasts such as bicyclists, skateboarders, skaters, and gymnasts stand to benefit from custom mouthguards, too. It is imperative that any child with braces/aligners wear one while playing sports.

We can advise on how best to care for, clean, and store a custom mouthguard. Bring it along to each dental visit for an evaluation. If you are interested in a custom mouthguard, give our office a call. Preventing dental repairs sure beats undergoing them.



Pregnancy's Impact on Oral Health ... and Vice Versa

For pregnant women, the whirlwind of bodily changes, doctor's appointments, and preparations for the baby's arrival sometimes pushes oral healthcare to the side—at a time when its priority should be even higher than normal.

Elevated hormone levels can cause changes in the way a pregnant woman's mouth handles bacteria, increasing the likelihood of gum disease. And gum disease isn't just the pregnant woman's problem; it can affect the baby, too. Research has confirmed that gum disease is linked to premature births and low birth weights. In addition, gum disease can occasionally cause serious heart issues and infection that have a direct bearing on the baby's health.

Pregnancy may alter a woman's diet, which can be great for the baby but isn't always good for teeth. Morning sickness can bring stomach acid into contact with teeth. Over time, tooth enamel takes a beating.

Concerning dental X-rays, today's digital X-rays expose pregnant patients and their babies to minuscule amounts of radiation, roughly the same as a two-hour plane flight. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends dental X-rays as part of a pregnant woman's routine dental care.

Brushing twice per day (despite the fatigue!), flossing daily, regular dental checkups, and reporting changes to your dentist are excellent steps toward a happy and healthy pregnancy.



E-Cigarettes Don't Improve Dental Health

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigs) have soared in popularity over the last few years. Though e-cigs do not utilize tobacco, thus eliminating smoke and cancer-causing tar, they are not harmless. E-cigs contain a number of toxins and place a spotlight on nicotine.

An e-cig's liquid nicotine is heated and converted into a vapor that is inhaled ("vaping"). But make no mistake, nicotine is an enemy of good dental health.

Nicotine is a vasoconstrictor, which means blood flow is restricted and the supply of oxygen and nutrients to soft tissue is diminished. The consequences to your mouth may include gum disease, gum recession, and a reduced ability to fight off harmful bacteria. Nicotine also interferes with saliva flow, which can result in dry mouth and an increased vulnerability to dental decay. Throw in possible ongoing bad breath for good measure.

Sometimes nicotine usage is a double whammy. In certain instances, while nicotine is promoting gum disease, it's disguising the symptoms. Gum disease (gingivitis) is noted for irritated gums that are red and may bleed. Since nicotine reduces blood flow, those symptoms might not be as evident.

If you insist on vaping, please be alert to its risks. Combat potential pitfalls by brushing twice a day, flossing daily, eating a healthy diet, and scheduling dental checkups twice per year.

A CROWNING Achievement

For some people, the term "dental crown" might have a negative connotation since it typically means something has gone slightly haywire with a tooth. But a dental crown is a versatile restoration that covers a tooth's natural crown (the visible portion of a tooth) to strengthen it, restore its shape and size, improve its overall appearance, and extend the life of the tooth.

A dental crown may be needed to ...

- protect a tooth with a cavity that's too large to fill.
- cover a tooth that's been hollowed out by a root canal and is susceptible to cracking or breaking.
- restore a cracked, severely worn-down, misshapen, or discolored tooth.
- more evenly distribute pressure within a tooth.
- hold a dental bridge in place or cover a dental implant.

Crowns can be composed of metal, ceramic, porcelain, porcelain fused to metal, or composite resin. Some materials are more durable than others; some blend in better with your natural tooth color; some require more or less natural tooth structure to be removed; and price will vary.

A tooth's location and function may play a role in what type of crown is best suited for your situation. Remember, crowns are not indestructible, and the natural tooth structure under a crown is not immune to cavities.

If you have questions about dental crowns, don't hesitate to give our office a call.



Teeth on the Move

Teeth sometimes shift position. It might be imperceptible to anyone but the person in the mirror; other times it's more conspicuous. There are several reasons why.

A loss of enamel caused by acid erosion or injury can change a tooth's shape, resulting in slight shifting. Clenching or grinding your teeth—typically while sleeping—places excessive pressure on teeth and can alter their alignment more rapidly.

When someone loses a tooth, it's a good idea to fill in the open spot (e.g., a dental implant). Otherwise, neighboring teeth may shift toward the opening to narrow the gap.

Filled cavities can change a tooth's shape, too. Sleeping on your stomach can prompt teeth to shift alignment as well.

Teeth can drift a tiny bit after braces are removed, highlighting the importance of retainers. Shifting teeth are also a natural byproduct of aging—something known as mesial drift, a common occurrence that is not fully understood.

For some people, shifting teeth are solely a cosmetic issue. For others, altered bite patterns might cause pain. Misaligned teeth are also tougher to clean, giving gum disease and tooth decay a better foothold.

If shifting teeth are a source of irritation or unhappiness, we offer effective solutions. Schedule a consultation with us to explore your options.



4250 Kalamazoo SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508-3607

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Floss Threaders: *Simple, Indispensable Tools*

Flossing at least once per day is an extremely important task. It takes the baton from toothbrushing and cleans between teeth and interrupts plaque buildup below the gumline, thus reducing the risk of tooth decay and gum disease.

Fixed bridgework, orthodontic wires, and removable-denture retainer bars can bog down the flossing process. Some people with dental appliances give up on flossing, which is a big mistake. These appliances afford plaque even more places to hide, accumulate, and wreak havoc.

Coming to the rescue is a simple but highly effective tool: a floss threader. A threader is a rigid yet flexible plastic tool that is a great help in maneuvering floss over and under dental-appliance obstacles. They can be found at any pharmacy or grocery store. They're easy to use, and you can utilize any kind of floss.

In addition to threaders, some types of floss have a rigid or wiry section every 18 inches or so. When the floss is cut there, the rigid sections can serve the same purpose as threaders.

For those with dental appliances, flossing need not be a source of frustration. If you have any questions, we're here to help.

