



Functional Orthodontics for Adults

There is no age limit on orthodontic correction. And while it is true that the teeth can move more quickly in children and teens, adults of all ages – including seniors – are not excluded from the benefits that orthodontic treatment can provide.

In cases where the bite is stable and functional in the back, and there is only a small amount of crowding in the front, Dr. Rich will often prescribe an accelerated braces system or series of clear aligners to straighten and align the crowded teeth. Clear aligners or accelerated braces are not always the most appropriate treatment for every case, but they can effectively correct many different kinds of crowding and offer patients a wonderful alternative to traditional braces.

In cases where the actual shape of the arch is too narrow to allow alignment of the teeth or proper support of the muscles and joints, Dr. Rich uses removable appliances to slowly expand and lengthen each arch, making space for the teeth and allowing the lower jaw to come forward if needed. Depending on the individual, clear aligners or traditional braces may be used to complete final tooth rotation and alignment into a beautiful, straight smile.

Many of the adult patients Dr. Rich treats have TMJ-related issues that cause them pain and bite dysfunction. Often these patients may have already had orthodontic treatment as a child that involved the removal of permanent teeth and the use of headgear to push the molars back to make room for erupting teeth. While many people who have had this kind of orthodontic treatment never experience any complications, for some the consequent repositioning of the lower jaw into a more backward position can contribute to the development of TMJ disorders.

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In these cases, restoration of function and esthetics is more complicated, but not impossible. Advanced computerized diagnostic testing is used to help determine the correct functional position for the teeth, joints, and muscles, and a removable splint may be used for a period of time to allow the joints and muscles to adjust to the new position before beginning any orthodontic correction.