

50 Questions to ask a prospective orthodontist

I. Find out about his or her credentials

- a) Where did he/she go to dental school?
- b) Where did he/she take his orthodontic training?
Be sure to find out if this was a two year university course, a three year course, a weekend at a "training institute"
- c) How long has he/she been in practice?
- d) Is he/she board certified?
- e) When was he/she board certified?
- f) What training has he had since he/she was board certified?
- g) Has he obtained Diplomat status (usually not necessary but impressive)
- h) What training has his assistant had?
Important because the assistant will do much of the work

II. Find out about his or her dental knowledge

- a) What prescription is he/she using for your braces and why did he/she choose it?
The orthodontist should be able to give you a specific answer
- b) If the answer is anything other than Roth or Andrews ask why he choose the prescription rather than Roth. Roth and Andrews are the two most common prescriptions. The orthodontist should be able to explain why he choose something else.
- c) If he choose Roth ask why he choose it rather than Andrews
- d) The answer should say something tipping your back teeth.
- e) If he choose Andrews ask why he choose it rather than Roth. The answer should say something tipping your back teeth.
- f) What does he feel about self-ligating brackets
Any answer is OK - just see if he answers
- g) Find out if he knows the symptoms of allergic reactions to: bands, brackets, archwires, rubber bands, acrylic. bands, brackets, archwires - tenderness in teeth more than 3 days after treatment, inflamed gums, rash on ears or wrist. If your mouth hurts "all the time" you are probably having an allergic reaction to your braces. rubber bands, acrylic - throat constriction, nasal drainage

III. Questions about his or her treatment plan

- a) Why did he/she choose extraction or non-extraction? No easy answers but he/she should be able to explain it
- b) Is he/she planning anything non-conventional for example lingual brackets, "functional" treatment?
- c) What size brackets is he/she using and why?

- d) What is he/she going to do to avoid stress on your temporomandibular joint? d)
How is he/she going to check for allergic reactions? Almost 1/3 of female patients have some allergy or sensitivity to dental materials so the orthodontist should have a way to detect an allergic reaction
- e) What will he/she do if you have an allergic reaction?
- f) What is he/she going to do to help you avoid caries during treatment?
- g) What type of headgear is he/she proposing and why? Avoid orthodontists proposing high-pull headgear
- h) Will he/she consider clear brackets? A negative answer is OK if the orthodontist can give a reason
- i) What is going to be done by the orthodontist and what is going to be done by his/her assistant?
- j) What is he/she going to do to avoid root resorption? Usually x-rays needed to check

IV. Questions about the orthodontists fees

- a) What is included in his/her fees? Followup visits? Broken retainers?
- b) What will he/she charge extra for?
- c) Does he/she accept insurance?
Orthodontists will sometimes charge lower fees to members of a managed care plan or dental buying group so it may pay you to get insurance or join a dental buying club.
- d) Can you pay in installments?
- e) Will he/she lower his/her fees for you?
- f) What happens if you move in the middle of treatment?

V. Sterilization questions

- a) Does he/she follow the current FDA guidelines on sterilization? Almost everyone will say that they do even if they do not!!
- b) How does he/she sterilize his instruments? Should use an autoclave or instrument sterilizer. If he/she mentions glutaraldehyde go somewhere else
- c) How does he/she sterilize his handpieces? Should use an autoclave or instrument sterilizer. If he/she mentions glutaraldehyde go somewhere else
- d) How does he/she sterilize his bands? Should use an autoclave or instrument sterilizer. If he/she mentions glutaraldehyde go somewhere else
- e) How does he/she sterilize his brackets, archwires, facebows? Should use an autoclave - and instrument sterilizer does not work. Many orthodontists assume that brackets, archwires, facebows are sterile when they arrive from the manufacturer. Many orthodontic companies do sterilize everything, but things can get contaminated after they leave the manufacturing facility. The latest FDA guidelines require brackets, archwires, facebows to be autoclaved before they are put in a patient's mouth. Make sure that the orthodontist does so.
- f) How does he/she sterilize his/her ligating modules (donuts)? The best way is to heat at 180 F (85 C) for 1 hour.

- g) How often is the sterilizer checked? The current FDA guideline is to do weekly spore testing (the old guideline was monthly testing)
- h) What kind of testing is done? every sterilizer should be spore tested
- i) Who does the tests? it should be a specific person or else the tests will be skipped
- j) What day are the tests done? If there is no schedule, the tests can be skipped
- k) Is there a label on the sterilizer showing when it was last tested Now required
- l) How often are the sterilization practices reviewed The latest FDA guidelines is that the practices be reviewed monthly
- m) How often does an independent testing lab come in to review the sterilization practices in the office. The latest FDA guideline is for there to be a yearly independent audit of the sterilization practices.
- n) Does the orthodontist offer free periodic health screening for his staff? The CDC suggests this

VI. Product reuse questions

- a) Does the orthodontist take things out of another patients mouth and "recycle" them to your mouth?
- b) If yes how does he/she sterilize things

VII. Continuing education questions

- a) How often does the orthodontist go to an orthodontic meeting?
- b) How often does his staff go to an orthodontic meeting?
- c) We did he last take or teach a continuing education course?
- d) When did members of his staff last take or teach a continuing education course?
- e) Is he a member of a study club?
- f) How often does the study club meet?
- g) Where do they meet?
- h) Well this is it. If you get answers to all of these questions, even wrong answers you know that you are dealing with a quality orthodontist.