URGENT

Straightening smiles through innovative problem-solving

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At In Harmony Orthodontics, we specialize in caring for children who need treatment for irregularities with their teeth. However, we offer more than traditional orthodontic care. In my practice, I help children achieve harmony with the jaws, tongue, posture and overall well being.

My practice is based on correcting the bad bite by addressing the underlying cause in addition to straightening the smile.

My philosophy is to treat the whole child, delivering the solution that is the ideal fit for each one. I help mom/primary caregiver with the concerns that keep her/him up at night about her/his child's health but have been left unanswered or brushed off.

My goal is for kids to have optimum chewing, breathing and speaking capacities, along with straighter teeth. I offer holistic, integrative and interceptive orthodontic services.

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The word integrative means unifying separate things. It also means combining traditional and complementary therapies. I look at the many different aspects of your child's health to determine the best treatment plan.

This includes tongue posture, breathing, feeding and sleep habits, as well as the facial and body posture. We help reinforce new habits for the best and longest lasting results. It's about creating the optimal environment for teeth to grow.

The goal of integrative orthodontics is for each patient to attain a healthy teeth alignment for best function as well as the most aesthetically pleasing result. We want to repair any damage that's been done to the face and teeth due to poor oral habits.

Proper jaw development is important because then there is room for proper tongue placement. Breathing and speech patterns can also improve. If jaw development is corrected when a child is young, the teeth may come in straighter.

There are a number of things that may cause a child to have misaligned teeth.

Thumb sucking and overusing pacifiers are two habits that have an impact on facial growth. Also, if your child is unable to breathe through the nose or chooses to breathe through their mouth, that airway obstruction may alter the way the face and jaw develop, which in turn affects teeth alignment. It may be common for children to breathe through the mouth, but it doesn't mean that it's normal or healthy. Mouth breathing can impact many aspects of oral and overall health.

Prosthodontist Dr. Jamila Miller said, "There is a correlation between bruxism (teeth grinding) and sleep apnea. Sleep apnea can be very severe for some patients. Left untreated, it can result in life-altering health issues. The mouth does not exist in a vacuum. If we restore the teeth without addressing the underlying cause, we risk treatment failure."

If your child grinds their teeth or has trouble sleeping, an examination is necessary. We evaluate very young children regarding tongue posture and breathing. We know that early intervention is important to make room for permanent teeth, and sometimes it can mean that full braces are not necessary.

Bre Grzych, Lac, LMT, of NWI Acupuncture and Green Pediatrics and Family Care, states that acupuncture is intrinsically a holistic therapy and that it can play a pivotal role in integrative orthodontics.

She says, "When the orthodontic goal is to improve the overall structure and function of the face, acupuncture can be a very beneficial adjunctive therapy. Aside from offering pain relief, it can offer neuromuscular stimulation to promote facial muscle symmetry/development and improve motor function of the tongue and jaw.

"Breathing through the mouth can lead to poor facial muscle function, improper facial bone development, poor dental health, decreased respiratory function and dysregulation of the digestive system. Working with various therapeutic modalities to promote proper nose breathing sets up the proper muscle and bone development of the face and palate as well as improved overall health."

Speech language pathologist Tracy Biggs, M.A., CCC-SLP of The Missing Link Speech Therapy commented, saying, "The collaboration of speech language pathology and dentistry link very easily when looking at oral function, structures and behaviors. I've studied orofacial myofunctional disorders (OMDs) that include abnormal lip-tongue resting posture, tongue and/or lip tie, tongue thrust during swallowing, poor nasal breathing and thumb sucking. OMD therapy creates a foundation for normal processes of orofacial and dental growth and development that improves an individual's overall health. This benefits breathing, swallowing, good oral habits, and communication."

It takes a team to address the underlying causes of your child's crooked teeth and/or bad bite.

At In Harmony Orthodontics, we do more than place braces. We collaborate with your child's dentist, pediatrician, speech pathologist, and other health-care professionals to understand all of the dynamics impacting your child's health. Together we can design the very best plan to straighten your child's teeth and improve his or her health overall for a lifetime of beautiful smiles.

To learn more about integrative orthodontics, visit **www.inharmonyorthodontics.com**.

If you have questions about your child's oral health, let's talk about it. Call 219-924-4031 for a free consultation.

Dr. Catherine Murphy, DDS, MSD, is a graduate of Indiana University School of Dentistry. She completed her Orthodontic residency in 2010. Dr. Murphy's focus on holistic, integrated, and interceptive orthodontic care began when her son was born. Doctors did not provide the answers needed regarding his lack of weight gain and sleep problems. When her son changed from nasal breathing to mouth breathing shortly after his birth, it was downplayed as insignificant. Dr. Murphy finally assembled a qualified health-care team to help her son thrive. Her struggle launched a quest to help other parents and caregivers in similar situations through her orthodontics practice.

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By Marc Chase

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Marc Chase is a veteran investigative reporter, columnist and editor of more than two decades. He currently leads The Times news staff as local news editor. He can be reached at 219-933-3327.

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