

# DIASTEMAS

**Q What is a diastema?**



**A** A diastema is a space or ‘gap’ between teeth – very often your front teeth. This is very common in children and is part of their normal dental development. About 50% of children between the ages of 6 and 8 have these. Most of these spaces close naturally as the mouth and teeth develop. In some cases this gap does not close naturally and a dentist’s advice is sought.

**Q What causes a diastema?**

**A** There are many factors that can contribute to the development of a diastema. Some of them include:

- Abnormal bone structure – sometimes the bone between the incisors will have a W-shaped defect – which can be seen on an x-ray. Such a defect will prevent the teeth from touching.
- Occasionally, there may be some extra tissue between the teeth which prevents them from touching.
- If you bite your lower lip it may aggravate such a problem.
- If your teeth have developed in such a way so as to allow space for the front teeth to drift apart.
- If you have a large tongue it may push the teeth forward.

This is not an extensive list, but covers the main causes.

**Q How will this gap affect me?**

**A** A gap between children’s teeth often causes concern. It can have an effect on speech (making ‘s’ sounds difficult to pronounce), aesthetics and social behaviour.

**Q What can a dentist do for me?**

**A** There are many innovative treatments available – restorative, surgery and

orthodontic. Treatment choices vary, and can only be offered after the correct diagnosis has been made. A dentist will need to look closely at the patient’s medical and dental history, do x-rays and clinical examinations and in some cases even do a tooth-size evaluation.

Contributing factors may also need to be considered. These include spacing of teeth in the mouth, vertical tooth overlaps, normal growth and development, tooth size and tooth angles.

The best treatment for the particular patient needs to be chosen. It is often more important to treat the cause of the diastema, rather than simply focusing on correcting the gap.

**Q How will my teeth be prepared?**



**A** The surface of your tooth will need to be roughened a little so as to give the veneer more chance of bonding to your enamel. A mould will be made of your tooth and a porcelain veneer made using this to make a perfect fitting veneer. Veneers can be trimmed and shaped a little more by your dentist to make them look perfect.



**Q Will it be painful?**

**A** Your teeth might be sensitive to cold for a while.

**Q How long will the veneer last?**

**A** Veneers can last for many years – but, they are not indestructible and can be chipped or damaged if treated roughly.

