

Daily Breeze

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Doctor's all about making people smile

Maryam Bakhtiyari spends her days not just putting braces on her patients' smiles. The local dentist also treats headaches, dizziness, snoring, sleep apnea, vertigo, neck pain and other disorders that can be caused by misalignment of the upper and lower jaws. Known as Dr. Maryam at her clinic, she also treats breathing problems associated with a narrow dental arch - the curve of the teeth in the jaw. A Manhattan Beach resident, Bakhtiyari, 42, runs Family Orthodontics in the same city. She has operated the clinic for the past four years.

How can so many disorders be connected to misalignment of the jaws?

They're all related. The major blood supply and nerves to the brain pass between the space between the lower jaw and ear. In that little region, the only way you can constrict this blood supply and nerves is at the lower jaw. For almost everybody with vertigo, ringing in the ears, migraines, sleep apnea, they have a misalignment of the upper and lower jaw.

How does your treatment work?

We align the jaws with special retainers to bring the lower jaw, or mandible, to the right position. There's no surgery, nothing invasive. Positioning the orthopedic retainer, or splint, is the difficult part. That's based on the X-rays.

How does your treatment cure sleep apnea?

For patients with sleep apnea, or a temporary stopping of breathing, they usually have a high palate, narrow

dental arch and an extreme overbite. We can put an orthopedic retainer to correct their overbite and expand the arch, so they can breathe better. When everything is out of alignment, their air is constricted, their nose is clogged. Even a little overbite, like a millimeter, can cause the trouble.

What does this have to do with a clogged nose?

If your dental arch is narrow, your nose is clogged. When you expand the upper arch, that expands the nasal floor, which will enable the patient to breathe better from their nose. We treat mouth breathing by improving the ability to breathe from the nose.

How long does the treatment last?

Fifteen months from beginning to end.

At what age can you start the treatment?

We can start at 5 years old for treatment.

Why 5?

The reason we pick 5 is the children's speech is formed by the age of 5, so we're not worried about affecting the speech.

Who is your typical patient?

Children and a lot of females. Females are more likely to have headaches, children for orthodontia and men for sleep apnea.

How much does your treatment cost?

It's between \$5,000 and \$7,000. The insurance usually pays partly from the dental insurance, partly from the medical insurance, if they have PPO.



We have to fight the insurance companies to get them to pay.

What if someone doesn't want to go through the entire treatment?

I have an appliance that I give my sleep apnea patients so their airways open up. That's something they wear when they sleep.

What's the best part of your job?

Just seeing the patients. We end up crying with them. I get too involved with my patients. This is a place where you get goose bumps daily. We all get excited every day when we have our daily meeting and discuss what patients are coming. I like it when a patient hugs me and prays for me. We're here to change patients' lives.