



The DeBroff DeBrief

## The Decision: Making Informed Choices about Orthodontic Care

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With the holiday season in full swing, that means the New Year can't be far behind. And we Moms know that once the holiday hoopla dies down, our next task will center around organizing the family's 2013 calendar of health care appointments, activities, and obligations.

For many Moms, the New Year proves a key time to schedule that orthodontic consultation your child's dentist advised. Yet it can truly present a daunting challenge – with finding an orthodontist, adding yet another series of appointments to an already-jam-packed calendar, dealing with the prospect of your child's ongoing discomfort, and calculating cost considerations.

I dealt with all these challenges and more when my kids wore braces, and that experience offered lessons learned and first-hand perspective. Here are my best recommendations for Moms about to enter The Orthodontic Years:



**Know You Have Choices:** So often we follow whatever our child's current dentist or health care provider tells us, without understanding that real choices now exist. We owe it to our families to ask for recommendations, explore different treatment avenues, speak up, ask questions, and not simply accept the option presented to us.

**Be an Informed Consumer:** I've since learned that all braces are not created equal and that dramatic changes have emerged since many Moms experienced braces first-hand. Before you sit down for an orthodontic consultation, make sure you've researched available options and talked with other Moms – all the things we normally do for any major purchase. And during the meeting, know you have the right to ask the orthodontist what type of braces will be used, why he or she recommends that approach, and what other options may be available.

**Drill Down on the Details:** For example, we often take for granted that teeth will need to be pulled or that extra appliances and pain come with the orthodontic experience. I now know that with the **Damon System**, invasive and uncomfortable procedures, such as surgery, tooth extractions, palate expanders, and headgear may be avoided. In the swirl of information surrounding a consultation, be

sure to ask questions about these ancillary procedures and approaches and find out if they can be avoided.

**Keep Lifestyle Factors in Mind:** Orthodontics often contributes to family anxiety through appointments that take place every four to six weeks, treatment time that extends past two years, regular discomfort, and hygiene-related battles over brushing. These lifestyle issues take a toll over time – but they don't have to be a part of the orthodontic experience. For example with the Damon System, appointments take place on average every eight to 10 weeks, treatment typically ends six months sooner than with traditional braces, patients experience less discomfort, and the lack of elastic ties presents less at-home brushing challenges.

**Understand the Health Care Implications:** We often focus on the most obvious aspect of braces – straight teeth! Yet orthodontics offers much more, including a real impact on patient health. After straightening, teeth become easier to brush and floss, which positively affects oral health and stems the tide against bacteria that can lead to gum disease. Also, once bites become aligned, patients experience less stress, strain, and headaches. As with any family health care decision, take the time to understand key factors and learn about emerging treatment options.



Conducting research and taking stock of available options can help Moms tackle the appointment-filled New Year with confidence – and help find the best orthodontic treatment strategy for their family. Tell us about your experiences!

*Disclosure: Stacy DeBroff is serving as a spokesperson for the Damon System.*

<http://www.momcentral.com/blogs/the-debroff-debrief/the-decision-making-informed-choices-about-orthodontic-care>