HAMILTON ORTHODONTICS

Herbst Appliance

One of the most common problems orthodontics treats is the discrepancy that occurs when the upper teeth protrude beyond the lower. Ordinarily, when we see a patient with the upper teeth protruding, we tend to think that the upper jaw and teeth are too far forward. More often than not, this condition is due to a small lower jaw that is further back than it should be. With these patients, we would like to encourage the lower jaw to catch up in growth. Appliances like the Herbst appliance help this happen.

Even though the Herbst appliance postures the lower jaw forward to encourage more lower jaw growth, normal opening and closing movements still occur easily. Patients learn to chew their food with their lower jaw in this new position. The Herbst appliance stays in the mouth for approximately 9-12 months. Braces are also used to straighten the front teeth during this time period.

As with all kinds of braces and appliances, patients with Herbst appliances need to be careful about what they eat. For instance, sticky foods such as caramels, bubble gum and candy suckers will pull the appliance away from the teeth. Foods like hard pretzels, crisp vegetables, ice and hard candies will bend and loosen the Herbst appliance. Please stay away from these foods during your orthodontic treatment.

Your Herbst appliance will be checked and adjusted about every 8 weeks at your appointments. If your Herbst loosens or you develop some irritation, call for an emergency appointment so that the necessary adjustments can be made.
Wearing a Herbst Appliance

At first, your mouth will feel unusually full and speaking will be awkward. If you practice reading aloud, your ordinary speech will return quickly. Chewing and swallowing will also be more difficult. You should plan on cutting food into smaller pieces, taking smaller bites of food and eating slower and chewing longer until you have had time to adjust to the appliance. You may also notice more saliva than normal. This will decrease as you become accustomed to the appliance.

