

# Talking with Patients

## Diastema Closure

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### WHAT IS IT?

A diastema is a space or gap between teeth. Although a diastema can occur in front and back teeth, we will only address front teeth diastemas because these spaces are more of an esthetic concern. Diastemas can result from tooth-size discrepancies, such as narrow or cone-shaped teeth, or from differences between the teeth's size and the space available for them in the arch. Poorly aligned and/or missing teeth also can result in diastemas. Diastema closure is the closing of this gap with bonding, veneers, or braces (orthodontics).

### WHEN IS IT NEEDED?

Diastema closure is needed when the diastema presents functional and/or esthetic concerns. Many

patients can tolerate and adapt to a diastema. As long as the diastema does not cause any functional and/or phonetic problems, it does not have to be corrected. Most of the time, diastema closures are performed for esthetic reasons.

When teeth are well aligned and only a small to moderate space between them is present, bonding is an easy, quick, and effective way to achieve diastema closure. Veneers are also excellent esthetic alternatives for the treatment of larger, multiple diastemas such as when undersized, small teeth are present. Bonding and veneers were described in a previous Talking with Patients (Volume 13, Number 6).

Braces (orthodontic treatment) are the best option for diastemas that result from poor dental alignment

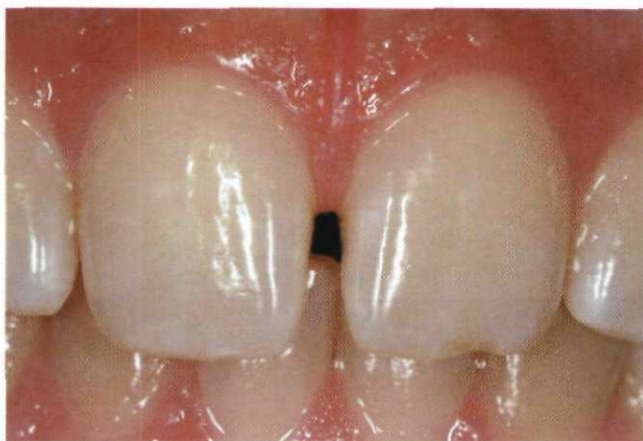
and/or when bite problems need to be corrected as well. Sometimes bonding or veneers are needed following orthodontic treatment to achieve the best esthetic result.

### CONCLUSIONS

Diastema closure is the closing of small to moderate gap(s) between teeth with bonding, veneers, or orthodontics. The best results are obtained when teeth are properly aligned and a relatively small gap is to be closed. These conservative esthetic procedures can significantly enhance a smile when properly done.

The following photographs show an example of diastema closure performed with bonding.

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Left, Before treatment: diastema present between the upper front teeth. Right, After treatment: diastema closed with bonding. (Photographs courtesy of Ed Swift Jr, DMD, MD, University of North Carolina School of Dentistry, Chapel Hill, NC, USA)

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