

CAMOUFLAGE OR “MASKED” ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

BY DR. ELI GHERMAN

It's Adar and Purim is in the air! The stores are stocked with costumes of all types and varieties. Everyone is happily deciding what family costume theme to use this year.

However, picking costumes for your family can be tricky. Each family member has to pick something that works for them.

At this point you may be asking yourself: What choosing the right Purim costume has to do with braces and fixing your teeth?

The answer is camouflage or “masked” orthodontic treatment. This type of treatment can be used when the orthodontist determines that the patient's teeth can be moved enough to mask the underlying skeletal discrepancy; in other words, the jaw disharmony is not so severe and thus there is enough of a base to mask it and create an acceptable bite.

In the Purim costume example, we would say that your five year old is tall for his age and if fitted with elevator shoes, then you may have enough material to work with to make him one fine looking giant.

Let's explain further when we would consider using camouflage treatment.

Most of the time, when a patient has a malocclusion (bad bite), it is due to both the position of the teeth, as well as the position of the jaws.

A well-trained orthodontist knows how to move both teeth and jaws.

While a child is growing we are able to rebalance the growth of the upper and lower jaws through the use of orthodontic appliances, such as a night brace, or an expander; however, once growth is complete, this is no longer possible, and if the skeletal discrepancy remains severe, then orthognathic surgery (a combination of braces and surgery) may be needed to move the jaws.

The fact that the growth of the jaws can be balanced during a child's development, is one of the reasons why the American Association of Orthodontics recommends children be seen by the orthodontist by seven years old. Don't panic if your child is past seven as most often at that early age, we will just get a baseline of how your child is growing, but do remember that earlier is better.

Now let's say you didn't get the memo, and you present to your orthodontist with a significant jaw discrepancy, after your growth has finished. What are your options?

CAMOUFLAGE ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT CAN BE USED WHEN THE ORTHODONTIST DETERMINES THAT THE PATIENT'S TEETH CAN BE MOVED ENOUGH TO MASK THE UNDERLYING SKELETAL DISCREPANCY; IN OTHER WORDS, THE JAW DISHARMONY IS NOT SO SEVERE AND THUS THERE IS ENOUGH OF A BASE TO MASK IT AND CREATE AN ACCEPTABLE BITE.

Generally, there are three options:

1. Orthognathic Surgery
2. Limited Treatment
3. Camouflage Treatment

1. Orthognathic Surgery: If your jaw discrepancy is very severe we may recommend orthognathic surgery which is done together with an oral surgeon. This treatment is often ideal and Israel has several good options for where and with whom to do this type of surgery.

2. Limited Treatment: The patient may decline surgery and choose to leave the jaw discrepancy. In this case, we can still move teeth into a healthier and more esthetically-pleasing position. However, it is limited because the jaw discrepancy remains and is often still obvious.

3. Camouflage Treatment: As discussed above, if surgery is declined but the discrepancy is workable, we can move the teeth into a healthier and esthetically more pleasing position. Moreover, we can mask the jaw discrepancy so that it is not visible.

With the following patient, M.B from RBS, camouflage treatment was utilized. There was no surgery or nor any teeth removed. The treatment took approximately 16 months.

Patient M.B before :



Patient M.B After:



“Throughout my whole life I was led to believe that without surgery my bite was hopeless. I did not want surgery and had nearly given up on ever correcting my smile. Following the camouflage treatment, my bite now feels more comfortable and I can also chew better. Most importantly, instead of hiding my smile, I now smile more than ever before!” M.B

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