

Why calling me a goofy is a sore point

1 in 5 children have 'goofy teeth'; often making them targets for name calling, bullying and harassment. They can have real problems eating or speaking which causes further embarrassment in public. All this can lead to significant psychological distress. Also, teeth that stick out are more likely to get damaged; this can cause problems with the way teeth look or work and make the child more unhappy. As an adult, these damaged teeth may not last as long as they should, and complicated dental treatment may be needed. Team sport is a source of great pleasure for many children, but the risk of damaging their teeth is then even higher! Orthodontists will always recommend that children who play active sport wear a gum shield.

Research shows that treatment of 'goofy teeth' leads to an improvement in self worth, confidence and psychosocial wellbeing.

Sometimes parents and children ask if thumb sucking caused their teeth to stick out. This can sometimes, but not always, be the case. Thumbs, fingers and dummies can make teeth stick out, stop front teeth meeting together properly or cause them to become lopsided; even the back teeth may not meet together! Almost all children have sucking habits when very young; a finger or another item (e.g. a dummy). Most children stop by the age of 4, and it is unlikely to cause any long term damage. If sucking carries on into school years the damage can be long lasting and require treatment. Dentists and orthodontists should encourage parents to stop the child's habit before they start school. It is often easiest to stop a dummy habit! The orthodontist can give advice and even sometimes provide a short treatment with a brace (habit breaker) to help.

