



Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,
Woodstock's Orthodontic Specialist

Q: My daughter is interested in being an orthodontist. She is a sophomore in high school. How does she prepare for this?

A: First of all, congratulations to her on seeking a rewarding profession. Her high school counselors can help line up the courses she will need to enter a good pre-professional program in college, but here are some things to concentrate on and goals to set for the next 12 years of studies. !Focus on your GRADES. Although schools say they like a well rounded individual with many activities under their belt, when it comes down to one student being selected over another, GPA talks loudest. Being in the habit of getting A's is a foundation that will be indispensable later on. Verify your true interest by working with an orthodontist, if possible. !Start seeking colleges with a strong pre-med, pre-dent program, and find out what %age of the graduates of that program get accepted into dental and medical schools. Often an undergraduate department chairman has influence with graduate schools based on the history of the caliber of the graduates from their program. I had such a professor/director at Carroll College in Helena, Montana. My orthodontist went there, and I, thankfully, followed his advise. !Taking the DAT's (Dental Admission Test) senior year in college. Scoring high on these is important. I recommend taking a Kaplan type of course to prepare for this. It is money well spent, as standardized testing has tricks that college doesn't prepare you for. !Once accepted into dental school, you are not out of the woods. Orthodontics is a popular specialty with very few openings nationwide. Being in the top 10 students in your dental school class is usually required to get in. I also opted to do a hospital based dental residency at Loyola between dental school and orthodontic residency. I feel it was invaluable for better medical understanding of the patient. After you get into an orthodontic residency, take a deep breath. You made it! Now learn all you can in your 2 year residency, because your skills are literally in your hands. Readers may contact me for more details.

!Dr. Christensen's column appears weekly in the Northwest Herald. Questions to be answered and treatment inquiries may be directed to: **Woodstock Orthodontics, c/o Kirk H. Christensen, DDS 226 West Judd Street, Woodstock, IL 60098, Phone: 815-337-5522**