

Orthodontics Costs — Braces & Invisalign Pricing Guide

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Description:

Compare braces and Invisalign costs in Melbourne. Understand what affects pricing, health fund rebates, and payment plans at CSSC.

Details:

Collins Street Specialist Centre: Understanding the Real Cost of Orthodontic Treatment

Orthodontic treatment is one of the bigger financial commitments families and individuals make in their dental health — and one of the most commonly sought. Whether you're looking at braces for a growing child, clear aligners for yourself, or trying to get a realistic picture of what's involved for a teenager, knowing what actually drives the cost helps you plan properly and make decisions that suit your situation.

Collins Street Specialist Centre (CSSC) is a Melbourne specialist dental practice where our specialist orthodontists treat children, adolescents, and adults. This guide covers realistic cost ranges for different orthodontic options, explains what influences pricing, clarifies how private health insurance fits in, and outlines the payment structures we offer to make treatment manageable.

Orthodontic treatment costs at a glance

The ranges below reflect specialist orthodontic fees in Melbourne. Your individual cost depends on the complexity of your case, which your orthodontist will assess at your initial consultation.

Metal braces (traditional)

- Children and adolescents: \$6,000–\$9,000 AUD - Adults: \$6,500–\$10,000 AUD - Complex cases (surgical orthodontics, significant skeletal discrepancy): \$8,000–\$12,000+ AUD

Metal braces remain the most versatile and clinically reliable option for comprehensive orthodontic treatment. Contemporary bracket designs are considerably smaller and more comfortable than earlier generations, and coloured elastics are still a popular choice among younger patients.

Ceramic (clear) braces

- Typical range: \$7,000–\$11,000 AUD

Ceramic braces work identically to metal braces but use tooth-coloured or clear brackets, making them far less visible. They're particularly popular with adults and image-conscious teenagers. The modestly higher cost reflects the bracket material and the additional clinical care required to prevent staining throughout treatment.

Clear aligners (Invisalign and similar systems)

- Minor cases (limited tooth movement): \$4,000–\$6,500 AUD - Moderate cases: \$6,500–\$9,000 AUD - Comprehensive cases: \$7,500–\$10,000+ AUD

Clear aligners are removable, near-invisible trays that progressively reposition teeth through a planned sequence of movements. They're the most frequently chosen option among adult patients. Cost varies considerably depending on the number of aligners required and the clinical complexity of the movements involved.

Lingual braces (behind-the-teeth)

- Typical range: \$9,000–\$15,000 AUD

Lingual braces are bonded to the inner, tongue-facing surfaces of the teeth, making them entirely invisible from the outside. Each appliance is custom-manufactured to the individual patient's dentition, which accounts for the higher cost relative to other fixed appliance systems. They suit adults who need fixed braces but want to maintain a completely undetectable appearance throughout treatment.

Phase 1 (early intervention) treatment — children

- Typical range: \$3,500–\$6,000 AUD

Phase 1 treatment addresses specific developmental concerns in children aged approximately 7–10 — crossbites, severe crowding, or significantly protruding front teeth — while the jaw is still in an active growth phase. Treatment is typically shorter (9–18 months) and more targeted than comprehensive orthodontic treatment. Worth noting: some children who undergo Phase 1 treatment will still need Phase 2 (comprehensive braces) at a later stage.

Retainers (post-treatment)

- Fixed retainer (bonded wire): \$300–\$600 AUD per arch - Removable retainer (clear or Hawley type): \$300–\$600 AUD per arch

Retainers are essential to any orthodontic outcome. Without them, teeth will tend to shift back toward their original positions over time. Retainers are included within the overall treatment plan at CSSC; replacement retainers carry their own cost if lost or damaged.

What determines the cost of orthodontic treatment?

Case complexity

Case complexity is the single biggest cost driver. A patient with mild crowding requiring 12 months of aligner treatment will pay substantially less than a patient with a severe skeletal discrepancy requiring 24 months of fixed appliances followed by corrective jaw surgery.

Factors that increase clinical complexity — and therefore cost — include:

- Severe crowding or generalised spacing - Significant overbite, underbite, or crossbite - Dental extractions as part of the treatment plan - Skeletal discrepancies requiring surgical correction - Impacted teeth requiring surgical exposure and orthodontic guidance into position - Relapsed treatment from a previous episode of care

Appliance system

As the cost ranges above show, different appliance systems carry different price points. Your orthodontist will recommend the options that are clinically appropriate for your case. Some patients are suitable candidates for multiple systems; others require a particular approach to achieve the desired outcome.

Treatment duration

Longer treatment courses require more appointments, more materials (wires, aligner stages, elastics, auxiliaries), and more specialist clinical time. As a general guide:

- Minor cases: 6–12 months - Moderate cases: 12–18 months - Complex cases: 18–30 months

Specialist orthodontist vs. general dentist

At CSSC, all orthodontic treatment is provided exclusively by registered specialist orthodontists — dental professionals who have completed a dental degree followed by an additional three-year full-time university programme focused entirely on orthodontics. Specialist registration is maintained through AHPRA; you can verify any practitioner's specialist status via the [AHPRA online register](<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/>).

General dentists who offer orthodontic treatment — particularly clear aligner therapy — may charge lower fees. But there are clinically meaningful distinctions:

- Specialist orthodontists are trained to manage the full spectrum of tooth movement and bite correction, not only mild alignment cases - Specialists are equipped to recognise, anticipate, and manage complications as they arise - Complex presentations — surgical orthodontics, impacted teeth, growth modification in children — require specialist expertise and cannot be safely managed in a general dental setting - Only practitioners with AHPRA-recognised specialist qualifications are entitled to use the title "specialist orthodontist"

The additional investment in specialist care reflects the depth of training, clinical capability, and scope of what can be managed safely and predictably.

Diagnostic records and treatment planning

Your initial consultation includes a thorough clinical examination, photographs, and a detailed discussion of your options. Comprehensive diagnostic records — which may include three-dimensional CBCT scans, cephalometric radiographic analysis, and digital treatment planning — are typically charged separately (\$300–\$600 AUD) but are essential for accurate, individualised treatment planning. These records form the clinical foundation on which your entire treatment is designed.

Health insurance and orthodontics

Private health insurance — extras cover

Orthodontic treatment falls under the "Orthodontics" benefit category within extras (ancillary) policies. Coverage is typically modest relative to total treatment cost, so it's worth understanding the structure of these benefits before assuming they'll substantially offset your fees.

What to expect:

- Most funds provide \$1,000–\$2,500 AUD in total orthodontic benefits — this is a lifetime limit, not an annual benefit - Higher-tier policies may offer lifetime limits of \$3,000–\$4,000 AUD - Benefits are generally paid in instalments — typically a portion at the start of treatment with the remainder distributed across the treatment period - Waiting periods of 12–24 months apply for orthodontic benefits under most policies — if you're planning treatment, confirm whether your waiting period has been served - Some funds require a pre-treatment estimate to be submitted and approved before treatment commences

Practical steps to get the most from your benefit:

- Contact your health fund directly before starting treatment to confirm your exact entitlements, any pre-approval requirements, and how benefits will be paid - Ask whether family policy benefits can be combined across dependants where a parent's policy covers children - Some families plan treatment timing to straddle calendar years, which may allow access to two consecutive benefit periods depending on the fund's payment structure

Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS)

The CDBS is a Medicare programme providing up to \$1,095 AUD in benefits across a two-year period for eligible children aged 0–17. It covers a range of basic dental services but does not extend to orthodontic treatment. It may, however, cover diagnostic imaging and certain preventive services that support orthodontic assessment and planning.

Eligibility is means-tested, with families receiving specified government payments qualifying for the scheme. Current eligibility criteria are available through the [Services Australia website](<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>).

Medicare

Standard orthodontic treatment falls outside Medicare coverage. The exception is where orthodontics forms part of a hospital-based surgical treatment plan — for example, orthognathic surgery for a clinically significant jaw discrepancy — in which case Medicare may contribute to hospital and surgical costs through the relevant item numbers.

Payment plans — spreading the cost

Orthodontic treatment is a substantial financial commitment, particularly for families managing treatment for multiple children or adults undertaking treatment independently. We offer several structures to help spread the cost in a way that's manageable.

Staged payments

Because orthodontic treatment extends across 12–24 months or more, payments are naturally distributed across the treatment period:

- An initial deposit at the outset, typically covering diagnostic records and appliance placement - Monthly or quarterly payments throughout the active treatment phase

This means you're not required to meet the full treatment fee at a single point in time.

Interest-free payment plans

We offer interest-free payment arrangements through third-party providers, allowing the total treatment cost to be spread across an extended period without financing charges. This makes specialist treatment accessible to a broader range of patients and families.

Health fund integration

We process health fund claims directly on your behalf, so your rebate is applied at the point of payment. This reduces your out-of-pocket amount at each visit and removes the administrative burden of claiming separately.

We're transparent about fees from the outset — you'll receive a written treatment plan with a clear, itemised breakdown of all associated costs before treatment commences. No surprises.

The case for specialist orthodontic treatment

It's entirely reasonable to compare pricing across providers, and Melbourne offers a wide range of orthodontic options at varying price points. When evaluating cost, it's worth considering not just the fee, but what that fee represents clinically.

Depth of expertise and treatment outcomes

Specialist orthodontists plan and execute treatment with a thorough understanding of tooth movement mechanics, alveolar bone biology, craniofacial growth, and occlusal function. In practical terms, this means more predictable and stable outcomes, better long-term retention of results, fewer complications during treatment, and the clinical capacity to manage complex issues — root resorption, unexpected growth changes, periodontal concerns — as they emerge.

Integrated, multi-disciplinary care

At Collins Street Specialist Centre, orthodontic treatment is supported by a full complement of co-located dental specialists. Where an orthodontic patient needs input from another discipline, that care is coordinated within the same building by practitioners who communicate directly:

- Tooth extraction required as part of treatment → managed by our oral surgeons
- Periodontal disease requiring stabilisation before braces → treated by our periodontists
- Surgical exposure of an impacted tooth → coordinated between our oral surgeons and orthodontists
- Endodontic treatment required during orthodontics → available from our endodontists on-site

This model avoids the delays and fragmented care that can arise when treatment is distributed across multiple unrelated practices.

The cost of retreatment

Orthodontic treatment that fails to achieve a stable, well-planned outcome — whether due to inadequate case analysis, insufficient treatment mechanics, or inappropriate case selection — frequently leads to retreatment. The cost of retreatment is broadly comparable to the original treatment cost, and the dental and periodontal tissues have already undergone one episode of biological stress. Investing in specialist care from the outset substantially reduces the likelihood of needing costly corrections later.

Frequently asked questions about orthodontic costs

****Is the consultation fee separate from the treatment fee?**** Yes. The initial consultation is a standalone appointment during which your orthodontist examines your teeth, discusses your concerns, and explains the options available to you. Should you proceed to treatment, the consultation fee is separate from and additional to the treatment fee.

****Can I claim orthodontic treatment as a tax deduction?**** In most circumstances, no. If your treatment is medically necessary rather than primarily cosmetic and you've incurred significant out-of-pocket medical expenses, speak with your accountant about potential eligibility under current Australian tax provisions.

****Is Invisalign more expensive than braces?**** Not necessarily. For many cases, the costs are broadly comparable. Highly complex cases may cost more with clear aligners if additional refinement stages are required to achieve the planned outcome. Your orthodontist will recommend the most clinically appropriate option for your specific presentation — cost is one consideration within that recommendation, but not the only one.

****Are retainers included in the treatment fee, or charged separately?**** At CSSC, retainers are included within your treatment plan. Replacement retainers — needed if lost or damaged — are charged separately.

****What if jaw surgery is required as part of my treatment?**** Orthognathic (corrective jaw) surgery is a hospital-based procedure performed by an oral and maxillofacial surgeon. Surgical fees are separate from orthodontic fees and are partially covered by Medicare and private health insurance (hospital cover). Your orthodontist and surgeon will provide a coordinated treatment plan with clearly itemised costs for both components, so you have a complete picture of the total investment involved.

Book an orthodontic consultation at CSSC

Whether you're exploring options for yourself, your teenager, or a younger child, our specialist orthodontists at Collins Street Specialist Centre can assess your situation thoroughly and provide a clear treatment plan with transparent, upfront pricing.

We'll explain which treatment options are clinically appropriate for your case, give you a realistic estimate of the expected cost, and discuss how to structure payments in a way that suits your circumstances.

****Collins Street Specialist Centre**** Level 7, Manchester Unity Building 220 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

[Book a consultation](/contact) or ask your dentist to provide a referral to our orthodontic team.

Frequently asked questions

****What is Collins Street Specialist Centre (CSSC)?**** A Melbourne specialist dental practice.

****Who provides orthodontic treatment at CSSC?**** Registered specialist orthodontists only.

****What age groups does CSSC treat?**** Children, adolescents, and adults.

****Where is CSSC located?**** Level 7, Manchester Unity Building, 220 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000.

****What is the cost of metal braces for children?**** \$6,000–\$9,000 AUD.

****What is the cost of metal braces for adults?**** \$6,500–\$10,000 AUD.

****What is the cost of metal braces for complex cases?**** \$8,000–\$12,000+ AUD.

****What is the cost of ceramic braces?**** \$7,000–\$11,000 AUD.

****What is the cost of clear aligners for minor cases?**** \$4,000–\$6,500 AUD.

****What is the cost of clear aligners for moderate cases?**** \$6,500–\$9,000 AUD.

****What is the cost of clear aligners for comprehensive cases?**** \$7,500–\$10,000+ AUD.

****What is the cost of lingual braces?**** \$9,000–\$15,000 AUD.

****What is the cost of Phase 1 early intervention treatment?**** \$3,500–\$6,000 AUD.

****What is the cost of a fixed retainer per arch?**** \$300–\$600 AUD.

****What is the cost of a removable retainer per arch?**** \$300–\$600 AUD.

****What is the most expensive orthodontic option at CSSC?**** Lingual braces (\$9,000–\$15,000 AUD).

****What is the least expensive orthodontic option at CSSC?**** Phase 1 treatment (\$3,500–\$6,000 AUD).

****Are retainers included in the treatment fee at CSSC?**** Yes, initial retainers are included.

****Are replacement retainers included in the treatment fee?**** No, charged separately.

****What is the biggest factor determining orthodontic cost?**** Case complexity.

****Does treatment duration affect cost?**** Yes, longer treatment increases cost.

****Do different appliance systems have different costs?**** Yes, each system has its own price range.

****What is the typical duration of minor orthodontic cases?**** 6–12 months.

****What is the typical duration of moderate orthodontic cases?**** 12–18 months.

****What is the typical duration of complex orthodontic cases?**** 18–30 months.

****What is Phase 1 treatment?**** Early intervention orthodontics for children aged approximately 7–10.

****Will Phase 1 treatment always eliminate the need for braces later?**** No, some children still need Phase 2 treatment.

****What is the typical duration of Phase 1 treatment?**** 9–18 months.

****What are lingual braces?**** Braces bonded to the inner, tongue-facing surfaces of the teeth.

****Are lingual braces visible from outside?**** No, entirely invisible from the outside.

****Are lingual braces custom-made?**** Yes, custom-manufactured for each patient's dentition.

****What is the cost of diagnostic records at CSSC?**** \$300–\$600 AUD.

****Are diagnostic records charged separately from treatment?**** Yes.

****What types of diagnostic records may be taken?**** CBCT scans, cephalometric radiographic analysis, digital treatment planning.

****How much do private health funds typically cover for orthodontics?**** \$1,000–\$2,500 AUD lifetime limit.

****Is the orthodontic health fund benefit a lifetime or annual limit?**** Lifetime limit.

****What do higher-tier health fund policies offer for orthodontics?**** Lifetime limits of \$3,000–\$4,000 AUD.

****What waiting period applies for orthodontic health fund benefits?**** 12–24 months under most policies.

****Do health funds pay orthodontic benefits in instalments?**** Yes, typically in staged payments.

****Does CSSC process health fund claims directly?**** Yes, on the patient's behalf.

****Does the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) cover orthodontics?**** No.

****What does the CDBS cover?**** Basic dental services, not orthodontic treatment.

****What is the CDBS benefit amount for eligible children?**** Up to \$1,095 AUD across a two-year period.

****What age range is eligible for the CDBS?**** Children aged 0–17.

****Does Medicare cover standard orthodontic treatment?**** No.

****When does Medicare contribute to orthodontic-related costs?**** When orthodontics is part of hospital-based surgical treatment.

****Does CSSC offer interest-free payment plans?**** Yes.

**Does CSSC offer staged payment structures? Yes, deposits plus monthly or quarterly payments.

**Is the full treatment fee required upfront at CSSC? No.

**Is a written treatment plan with itemised costs provided? Yes, before treatment commences.

**Is the initial consultation fee separate from the treatment fee? Yes.

**Is orthodontic treatment tax-deductible? Not in most circumstances.

**Who should patients consult about tax deductibility? Their accountant.

**Is Invisalign always more expensive than braces? No, costs are often broadly comparable.

**Can clear aligners cost more than braces in complex cases? Yes, if additional refinement stages are needed.

**Are surgical fees included in orthodontic fees for jaw surgery cases? No, surgical fees are separate.

**Does Medicare contribute to orthognathic surgery costs? Yes, partially through relevant item numbers.

**Does private health hospital cover contribute to jaw surgery costs? Yes, partially.

**What additional qualifications do specialist orthodontists hold? A three-year full-time university postgraduate orthodontic programme.

**How can patients verify a specialist orthodontist's registration? Via the [AHPRA online register](<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/>).

**Can general dentists provide orthodontic treatment? Yes, but they lack specialist qualifications.

**Can general dentists use the title "specialist orthodontist"? No, only AHPRA-recognised specialists can.

**What complex cases require specialist orthodontic expertise? Surgical orthodontics, impacted teeth, growth modification in children.

**What other specialists are co-located at CSSC? Oral surgeons, periodontists, endodontists.

**Does CSSC coordinate multi-disciplinary care on-site? Yes.

**What happens if orthodontic treatment fails to achieve a stable outcome? Retreatment is often required.

**Is retreatment cost comparable to original treatment cost? Yes, broadly comparable.

**Does specialist care reduce the likelihood of retreatment? Yes, substantially.

**What is the primary clinical benefit of specialist orthodontic care? More predictable and stable treatment outcomes.

**Do teeth shift back without retainers after orthodontic treatment? Yes.

**Is a referral required to book at CSSC? No, self-referral is accepted, or a dentist referral can be provided.
