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A child who has a cleft lip and palate condition makes for a challenging correction. Getting the facial and dental complex in order can be a long and involved journey that is facilitated by a team of healthcare specialists.

One such transformation was undertaken by one of our young patients, A.S. He was born with a left cleft lip and palate. Today, A.S. is a happy, healthy 16-year-old, but it was quite the journey. His mother cannot say enough about the results and the happiness of her son. She says he beams with confidence. He loves being a part of photos, and loves to show off his wonderful smile. She calls the results nothing short of a miracle.

When he first came to us, A.S. was 7 years old. Dr. Blom decided it was the right time to start the correction process. The procedure to repair a cleft lip and palate is team-oriented and it takes a significant amount of strategy, long-term treatment, and the complete commitment of the patient and parents to produce a result that is both functionally and esthetically correct.

It's not uncommon for orthodontics to be viewed as a practice that is solely focused on teeth. For many patients, it's about braces and making sure everything is aligned correctly after treatment. Behind-the-scenes, orthodontics is much more comprehensive. While teeth play a major role in what we do, there is a lot that happens below the surface—what isn't immediately seen. Orthodontics includes the jaw, the gums, and the overall health of the mouth, as well as the many systems these influence. These elements are not independent of one another.

And then there is growth and development. Orthodontists see a lot of children and teens who are still growing and changing, adding another variable. In cleft lip and palate patients, there are frequently missing or displaced parts. It requires strategy to adapt to those differences. As A.S. was growing, Dr. Blom had to take special care when considering treatments. He calls it a “Detective Story” and one that goes far beyond teeth. It requires an understanding about physical and oral development as well as the psychological maturation and well-being of the child.

Before A.S. began treatment, he was physically missing part of the structure right below the left nose. It was void of teeth, gums, nose, lip and bone. These can be repaired. But it goes beyond what's physically missing—it's also about replacing and rearranging misaligned parts. All the while, building confidence as normalcy takes shape.

While the orthodontist plays a major role of bringing this all together, it really takes the efforts of a team. It's a dedicated group of specialists working closely to make sure everything comes to fruition. This includes pediatricians, periodontists, plastic surgeons, oral surgeons, ear, nose, and throat specialists, speech pathologists, and more. The goal of this team is to create a semblance of normalcy for the patient. They put together a plan, from beginning to end, and proper sequencing. A.S. was first examined at age seven and his final occlusal correction completed at age fifteen. In the case of A.S., it is a testament to good treatment and commitment by the patient, parents and team of clinicians.

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU to those who referred a new patient or posted a review!

Michelle H.      Mary W.
Lily M.          Karen R.
Samantha C.     Jill A.
Veronica H.      Jesus G.

FROM OUR Patients...

“I wasn’t very excited when I found out I had to get braces for what was estimated to be two years. Thankfully Dr. DeLurgio introduced me to the Accelendent Device © which saved me an entire year. My braces are off earlier than I expected and my teeth and bite are perfect, I couldn’t be happier with the results.”

- Catie M.
Regardless of how long you've been with your sweetheart, come Valentine’s Day, it can be difficult to think of something fun and romantic to do that isn't (A) super expensive, or (B) overly cheesy. And even though your significant other may claim to not care about the holiday, telling you that V-Day is for squares, there's nothing wrong with a little surprise and delight come February 14th. But, if you can't think of anything, here are a few date ideas that will have him or her swooning in no time:

**1.** **Celebrate the small things.**
If it's your boo that you're trying to impress, nothing says, “I love you,” like a walk on the wild side. It doesn't have to be anything too crazy, but taking your one and only skydiving, or on a rigorous hike can not only get the adrenaline pumping, but also strengthen your love and trust in one another. After all, what's more romantic than cheating death together?

**2.** **Give Creative.**
Although some people scoff at handmade gifts, there really is something special about handing someone a gift that you made with your own two hands. Sure, it may not be as pristine as a store bought gift, but that little bit of imperfection is endearing and a great way to show your gratitude to someone who's chosen to stick by you through thick and thin. If you go this route though, don’t wait until the last minute. Put in the effort and unleash your inner heart eyes emoji.

**3.** **Make it about the holiday, telling you that V-Day is for squares.**
Regardless of how long you've been with your sweetheart, come Valentine’s Day, it can be difficult to think of something fun and romantic to do that isn't (A) super expensive, or (B) overly cheesy. And even though your significant other may claim to not care about the holiday, telling you that V-Day is for squares, there's nothing wrong with a little surprise and delight come February 14th. But, if you can't think of anything, here are a few date ideas that will have him or her swooning in no time:

**4.** **14th. But, if you can't think of anything, here are a few date ideas.**

**5.** **Chocolate Fournier.**

**Chocolate Fournier**

**Ingredients**
- 3 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon brewed espresso
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt
- 1 banana, peeled and cut into 8 pieces
- 8 1-inch chunks fresh pineapple
- 4 strawberries

**Directions**
1. Place chocolate, cream, espresso, vanilla and salt in a small heatproof bowl. Microwave 20 seconds to a minute until chocolate melts, stirring every 20 seconds, until melted, 1 to 2 minutes.
2. Pour the chocolate mixture into a serving bowl. Serve with fruit.

**Hidden Risks for Diabetics**

**Regular Checkups.**

Dentists are taught to catch the earliest signs of any mouth-related irregularity. By seeing your doctor every six months, you can help keep your mouth bacteria-free. You've probably heard it many times before, but make sure (especially if you have diabetes) that you exercise, eat healthfully, keep your glucose under control, and watch your cholesterol. Unfortunately, being diabetic increases your risk for many things—don't make “gum disease” just one more thing you have to put up with. See your doctor regularly and take care of your health. That means your teeth too.