

The Bulletin



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Dr. Karen Reisner's suburban New Jersey practice includes many adult patients, in part because of her networking efforts with nearby general dentists and dental specialists.

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Adult Orthodontic Patients



The Adult-Friendly Orthodontic Practice

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Dr. Mark Bronsky has had a large adult patient population since he first entered practice in New York City. Here he is pictured with patient Stephen Cordes.

Cover photo by Fadi Kheir

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Photo by Fadi Kheir

A SUBURBAN PRACTICE WITH A LARGE ADULT PATIENT BASE

After completing her dental degree at Columbia University and her orthodontic residency at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Karen Reisner began her orthodontic career in New York City.

"Many adults are interested in orthodontic treatment and in New York City about 30 to 40 percent of my patients were adults," says Dr. Reisner. "Their reasons for seeking orthodontic treatment were numerous, including some whose families could not afford orthodontic treatment while they were growing up – or maybe a sibling had worse problems than they had and therefore they did not receive treatment. Others had treatment in their teens, but were not diligent about retention and their teeth began to shift over the years.

"Many adults have complex problems requiring a multidisciplinary approach," adds Dr. Reisner. Very often an adult has periodontal issues or may require extensive restorative work or orthognatic surgery."

About 12 years ago, Dr. Reisner started her New Jersey practice and for the past eight years has been located in Cresskill. She liked having a substantial adult patient pool in New York City and realized that sustaining an adult patient population in a suburban location would be a long-term process.

"There are many people who commute from the suburbs to New York City to work," says Dr. Reisner. "Scheduling is key to accommodating their busy lifestyles. I have late office hours one evening per week and work every other Saturday."

In addition to scheduling, Dr. Reisner examined every aspect of her office environment from the perspective of the adult patient. In her small office, separate areas for teens and adults are not practical, so with the help of an interior decorator, she created a calming environment throughout the office. WiFi access in the waiting area is popular with adults and teens alike.

Dr. Karen Reisner is pictured in front of a world map in her office waiting area. The map is a conversation piece for her patients of all ages, who may insert pins to mark places where they have lived or that they have visited.



Photo by Fedi Kheir



Photo by Fadi Kheir

Dr. Karen Reisner's adult patient base includes middle-aged and older adults as well as young adult patients like Elissa Bonito, who will soon turn 19.

Communication is Key

"Very often adult patients are self-conscious about being in an office filled with teens," says Dr. Reisner. "We make certain that our adult patients understand that if they schedule appointments between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., they will be part of the after-school rush. Appointments in the early morning or at the end of the day are often preferred."

Dr. Reisner emphasizes that initial communication with the adult patient must also focus on understanding the patient's expectations and ensuring that the patient understands what is realistic.

"After taking my initial record, I spend significant time working up the case and coming up with an individual treatment plan," says Dr. Reisner. "I then meet with the patient to go over their case and treatment options in great detail. Even though this is time-consuming, it is imperative that the patient understands the limitations of treatment and realistic goals, before treatment even begins."

In the case of a patient with a severe malocclusion who would clearly benefit from surgery, for example, Dr. Reisner presents the outcomes of differing treatment approaches.

"If surgery is not an option for this particular patient, the patient needs to accept that the outcome will be less than ideal," she says. "Sometimes space needs to be opened up for an implant restoration. Again, communication is imperative. One needs to make sure that the space created is sufficient and that the implant will be placed in the most ideal position for orthodontic treatment, as well as for the restorative treatment."

Dr. Reisner also makes certain that patients understand the importance of compliance with treatment requirements in assuring the desired outcome.

"Even patients with healthy gums must still understand the importance of frequent dental cleanings to reduce the risk of periodontal disease," she says. "We recommend that adult patients see their general dentists or referring specialists every three to four months for check-ups, or even more frequently if needed."

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— Dr. Karen Reisner

Photo by Fredi Kheir



Past Surgical Patients Assist with Education

As her practice in Cresskill evolved, Dr. Reisner focused her efforts to grow her adult patient base on networking with general dentists and nearby dental specialists. Recently, for example, she gave a series of live-stream lectures for referring dentists and specialists that addressed topics like TMD and new trends in restorative dentistry.

As a result of her long-term networking efforts, Dr. Reisner's adult case load has become a strong part of her practice. A number of her cases involve orthognathic surgery.

"While the oral surgeon performs the surgery and sees the patient for a limited time before and after surgery, the orthodontist sees the patient at every step of the process," she says. "It is very helpful to show photos of patients who have undergone similar orthognathic surgery procedures. I have some finished patients who are very willing to discuss their surgical journeys with prospective patients. I get permission from former surgical patients and let them talk to the prospective surgical patient about braces, surgery and the entire process. I have been doing this for some time and find it really helpful to the patient. Sometimes, patients may have questions that they do not want to ask me and feel more comfortable asking someone who has been through what they are about to experience."

While adult patients may present different clinical and communication challenges than teens, Dr. Reisner continues to enjoy working with them.

"Adults are typically very dedicated to making their treatment as ideal as possible because for many of them, orthodontic treatment has been a long-term personal goal," she says. "I am thrilled that adults who I treated in New York City 15 years ago come to my office in New Jersey for follow-up visits, and that they are still diligently wearing their retainers."

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Dr. Karen Reisner is pictured with a young adult patient, Elissa Bonito. No matter their age, Dr. Reisner focuses heavily on making certain that she understands the expectations of adult patients and communicates extensively with them about what is realistic.

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