

Braces or Invisalign: How do I Straighten my Teeth?

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The most common reason for wanting to straighten teeth is of course to look good. There is no denying that a straight row of teeth will give a more attractive smile. Apart from looking good, straight teeth are easier to keep clean. This, in turn makes it less likely for your teeth to have decay or gum disease. Straight teeth also lead to better bites – that is the upper and lower teeth bite more effectively.

The traditional way of straightening teeth have been with braces – in either metal or ceramic. Most people are familiar with braces. Special wires on the brackets (braces) gently move the teeth into place. The wires need to be adjusted every 4 weeks or so. Certainly, some time is needed to get used to the braces and metal within the mouth.

There are many adults who are unhappy with the arrangement of their teeth. But what holds them back is the thought of wearing braces and metal wires. Now, with Invisalign, it is possible to improve the alignment of teeth without braces or wires.

Invisalign, uses a series of custom-made, transparent, removable aligners that fit over the teeth – like contact lenses for the teeth! Each aligner is worn for 2-3 weeks and is designed to move the teeth a little at a time.

The main advantages of Invisalign are that the aligners are

- ▶ **Clear** – people don't need to know you are straightening your teeth
- ▶ **Removable** – you can eat whatever you want and it is easy to clean your teeth.
- ▶ **More comfortable** – no sharp braces or wires to get used to

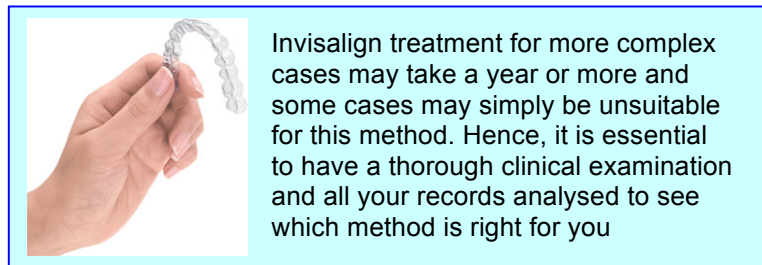
What will Invisalign treatment be like?

The aligners need to be worn about 20-22 hours a day. i.e. they are only removed for eating and cleaning. Each aligner needs to be worn for a minimum of 2 weeks before changing to the next aligner in the sequence. Patients need to be reviewed by the dentist about every 6 weeks to ensure that the teeth are moving according to plan. As there are no wires to change or adjust, each appointment is usually much faster – and less painful.

Is it for Everyone?

Invisalign is suitable for adults who have mild to moderate irregularities of their teeth. It is particularly suitable for those who have had treatment with braces in their teens but now have mild relapse. Braces, on the other hand are much more versatile and can treat a wide variety of problems. In cases of severe crowding, where teeth need to be extracted, it is possible that treatment with Invisalign will mean longer treatment – and naturally, increased cost.

There are other issues to consider, such as your lifestyle or habits and your expectations. Fixed braces cannot be removed, so cleaning may be more difficult. This is a particular concern for those adults who have already suffered some bone loss due to gum disease and need to practise a high level of hygiene. On the other hand, Invisalign is removable so a high degree of discipline is needed on the part of the patient to make sure that the appliance is worn diligently according to instructions. Invisalign is best for people for whom it is necessary that their treatment be discrete. Cost is another factor. All other things being equal, treatment with Invisalign does cost more. The extra cost may be worthwhile depending on your expectations and the demands of your work or social life.



What is the first step?

If you want to know whether Braces or Invisalign treatment is appropriate for your condition, you need to have an orthodontic consultation. At this consultation, your records like X-rays, photographs and models of your teeth will be made by the clinic. One advantage of Invisalign is that a computerised simulation of how your teeth will move during treatment, and the expected end-result, can be viewed by you to help you make a decision. Only after you agree to treatment and give the go-ahead, will the Invisalign aligners be manufactured.



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