

Tooth Talk

**“Hey Doc, my teeth are crooked. I don’t like my smile!
I want straight teeth. What are my options?”**

(part 4-Orthodontics(Braces))

For those who want their crooked teeth to become straight but do not want any restoration placed on their teeth, Orthodontics(Braces) will be the treatment of choice. Braces has been around for a long time and it is no longer only for children. Adult Orthodontics has been gaining popularity over the last few decades and more and more adults are now opting for braces as their paths towards a beautiful smile.

Traditional Orthodontics.

Traditional Orthodontics involves using metal bands, metal brackets, and metal wires of different sizes to level, align, and straighten the crooked teeth. In severe crowding cases, teeth may have to be removed in order to create spaces for the remaining teeth to uncrowd. Traditional full Orthodontics not only straightens the teeth but also aligns the upper and lower teeth together to improve the bite. It generally takes 1 to 2 years for a case to complete. Nowadays, clear brackets and clear wires can be utilized in order to minimize the amount of metal showing during treatment.

Lingual Orthodontics

Similar to traditional Orthodontics, lingual Orthodontics utilizes brackets and wires to straighten teeth except the brackets and the wires are placed on the inner surfaces of the teeth so that there is no metal showing during treatment. Lingual Orthodontics is more complicated due to the fact the brackets, sometimes the wires also, have to be custom fitted on the models first and then transferred to the mouth for optimal accuracy. Patient's tongue has to get used to all the metal in the mouth also. Costwise, it is usually higher than the traditional Orthodontics. However, it can deliver a superb result without any metal showing. Quite often, actors/actresses/singers/public figures will choose lingual Orthodontics to improve their smiles

Fast Braces

Fast Braces, sometimes referred to as 6-month Braces, is a good way to straighten crooked teeth in a short period of time. Again, it employs brackets/bands/wires, either metal or clear, to move teeth. With Fast Braces, the goal is to straighten the front 4 to 8 teeth only, leaving the imperfection within the bite alone. The front teeth are slenderized or reduced in width using discs or strips to create the spaces necessary to uncrowd teeth. The treatment time usually takes about 6 months or less and it can be done only on the upper teeth if the primary concern is only the crowding on the upper front teeth. For those who manage to live with their less-than-ideal bite throughout their lives without any health issue and only want their front teeth straight, Fast Braces can be a good treatment option, especially if treatment time length is of essence. By the way, Fast Braces can be performed using lingual braces for optimal esthetics during treatment.

Aligner therapy

For those who do not want any braces showing and do not want to be involved with the complexity of lingual Orthodontics, aligner therapy can very well be the treatment of choice. Aligner therapy involves the patients wearing a series of transparent aligners or trays over their teeth. Each aligner moves the teeth a slight amount to start the teeth straightening process. During treatment, the teeth are slenderized or made narrower to create the spaces needed for the teeth to become straight. Aligner therapy is gaining popularity at an exponential rate in the recent years due to the ease of treatment, esthetically pleasing, and minimal discomfort involved. However, it does take time for the treatment to complete and patients have to be compliant with wearing the aligners. Also, on occasions, it can be difficult to correct the minor rotation, tipping of the teeth near the end of treatment using the aligners alone.

In summary, there are now different technologies and techniques available for people with crooked teeth to obtain their dream smiles with beautiful and straight teeth. Sometimes, a combination of Braces and veneers/composite bonding/crowns may have to be utilized for the optimal result. Each patient is encouraged to consult with his/her dentist to find out which treatment of choice will be the best for him/her.

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