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Teeth aligners: What they are and how they work

FOR DR. ROZE BIOHEALTH CLINICS | MONDAY August 15 , 2022

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A self-reported 25% of people avoid smiling due to the condition of their mouth and teeth, according to a 2015 survey by the American Dental Association. If you're experiencing embarrassment due to crooked or misaligned teeth, invisible teeth aligners may be able to help you achieve a smile you're proud of. Here's what teeth aligners are and how they work.

1/- What are invisible teeth aligners?

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Invisible teeth aligners are clear, tight-fitting mouthpieces that fit over your teeth. They're a popular alternative to traditional metal braces.

"Invisible teeth aligners are clear, removable, and are worn all day and all night," Andrew Geller, DDS, a dentist at Geller Family Dental, tells WebMD Connect to Care. "They are only removed for eating, drinking, and brushing your teeth."

These aligners are less noticeable than traditional metal braces but can achieve similar results for many patients.

"Invisible teeth aligners are prescribed for patients interested in correcting crowding of teeth, spacing, bite issues, and those who want an overall improvement in their smile," Geller says. "The aligners can accomplish the same things as fixed braces, and treatment time is generally quicker."

2/- How do aligners straighten teeth?

Invisible teeth aligners work similarly to traditional metal braces, but they don't involve getting metal brackets glued to your teeth or placing wires in your mouth.

Teeth aligners are created from molds or digital scans of your teeth. These molds are used to create a series of clear plastic mouthpieces that put gentle pressure on your teeth and gradually move them into proper dental alignment, according to the American Association of Orthodontists. You will wear each set of mouthpieces for 1-2 weeks before switching to a new set that will move your teeth to slightly different positions.

Invisible teeth aligners can straighten teeth and lead to a healthy smile as long as you wear them as prescribed. Geller says you should be honest with yourself about what type of treatment you are willing to commit to.

"In total, patients looking to straighten their teeth should wear their aligners 22 hours a day," Geller says. "Unmotivated patients often stop wearing their aligners altogether or do not wear them for the appropriate amount of time. This can potentially lead to even more challenging dental issues that are difficult to correct."

3/- What happens to your dental health if you straighten your teeth?

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Crooked teeth don't just affect your smile—they can negatively affect your dental and overall health, according to the American Association of

Orthodontists. Problems can include:

- Increased risk of tooth decay
- Increased risk of tooth injury
- Decreased health of jawbones and joint problems
- Difficulty eating food

Concerns about teeth straightening procedures may cause some people to not seek treatment, but Mayo Clinic points out that braces are a generally very safe treatment option. There are also a number of safe and more modern orthodontic treatments available.

"Orthodontic treatment to straighten the teeth is a safe procedure if done properly by a licensed dentist or orthodontist," Norman J. Nagel, DDS, from Nagel Orthodontics, tells WebMD Connect to Care. Nagel adds that there are many benefits of teeth straightening.

"Straight teeth allow the patient to clean their teeth easier, although tooth brushing and flossing are still critical. If patients can chew their food more efficiently because their teeth are straight, their digestion may also improve. Straight teeth that occlude without interferences reduce the possibility of significant abrasion or attrition of the dental enamel. Straight teeth allow for improved gum health," Nagel says.

4/- What are your teeth straightening options?

There are different teeth straightening options based on how misaligned your teeth are, how healthy your gums are, and the results you want to see at the end of treatment.

One option is braces—metal or ceramic brackets that are glued to teeth and connected to wires. The wires gradually shift the teeth over time to fix alignment issues. Both children and adults can use braces and the treatment could last around two years.


Another option for straightening teeth is using clear or “invisible” aligners. Clear aligners are tight-fitting custom mouthpieces that fit over your teeth. Orthodontists usually prescribe these devices for adults and teens.

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Clear aligners are removable, and you will use several mouthpieces throughout your treatment, with each mouthpiece moving your teeth more towards alignment.

Enamel shaping is a quick and easy treatment that is used to align slightly uneven or crowded teeth. It is typically combined with other dental procedures like veneers, and the results are immediate.



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