

Braces vs. Clear Aligners: What's the Difference?

Straight teeth and a fantastic smile are dental goals for many of us, as an attractive smile can boost our self-confidence and bring us closer to those around us. However, with so many different ways to improve a smile, many people are often left confused and unsure of which is the best option for them.

Two of the most common methods of straightening teeth are clear aligners and (traditional) braces. While clear aligners are newer, many people are still opting for traditional braces. Read on to learn why, as well as which method might be best for you.



How Traditional Braces Work

Traditional braces are typically made of metal or ceramic wires and are attached to your teeth with bonding material. They are most often used by adolescents, but recently more and more adults are getting braces too.

Braces straighten your teeth by putting constant pressure on them, causing your jaw to gradually adjust its shape accordingly. Getting braces installed doesn't hurt, but you may experience mild soreness throughout the treatment as your teeth move into place.

Retainers are aligner trays prescribed after completing treatment with traditional braces. They're used to keep your teeth in their new place. The duration of use will depend on the type of retainer, but typically you will need to wear it full time (other than when eating or cleaning) for the first 6 months and then nightly after that.

How Clear Aligners Works

Clear aligners are made from a flexible plastic material - perfect for fixing teeth while being almost invisible. They can fix many of the same issues as traditional braces, such as over/underbites, crowded teeth, and gaps in teeth.

The process of getting clear aligners involves getting a 3D scan of your mouth and jaw which is used to create custom-fit aligners. Similar to braces, these aligners put pressure on your teeth to move them into the desired position.

Typically, you'll need to switch aligners every 1-2 weeks and wear them for 20-22 hours in a day.

Differences Between Braces and Clear Aligners

Here are a few key differences between traditional braces and clear aligners:

- **Appearance:** As the name suggests clear aligners are much less visible and can align teeth without the metal wires and brackets visible in the case of braces.
- **Comfort:** Clear aligners are more comfortable since they are custom-fitted to your teeth. Comfort levels for braces can vary depending on add-ons needed, such as head gear and elastics.
- **Ease of use:** Clear aligners need to be removed when eating and when drinking hot or colourful drinks to avoid staining. While braces don't need to be removed in these cases, there are some food limitations and it can be more difficult to thoroughly clean braces.
- **Duration and cost:** Depending on the current state of your teeth/smile and other factors, the duration and cost of both treatments can vary greatly, so check with your dentist for more information.

At the end of the day, whether braces or clear aligners are a better solution for you depends on a variety of factors. Only your dentist and orthodontist will be able to consider your unique situation and make a personalized recommendation. Contact our dental office today so we can evaluate and determine the best orthodontic solution for your smile!