

FOCUS ON BEAUTY & HEALTH

A New Age of Orthodontics Part 2: Adult Treatment to Improve Oral Health and Beauty by Juan-Carlos Quintero, DDS, MS

Previously, I wrote about the advantages of early orthodontic treatment during childhood and the ability to influence the growth of the jaws in a positive manner. I recommend that children be seen for the first time at 4 or 5 years of age to check facial development, although treatment this early is usually not necessary. Since most facial growth occurs between ages 6 and 10 (90% by age 10), it is important to begin any needed facial growth modification treatment during this window of opportunity.

During early ("Phase I") treatment, the growing jaw bones can be aligned and developed, eliminating the need to remove permanent teeth in the vast majority of cases. We not only have the ability to prevent bite problems early on, but also to obtain beautiful facial profiles and develop healthy, beautiful smiles during this crucial time of facial growth and dental development.

Can orthodontists still achieve superb results once adulthood is reached? The answer is a resounding YES! Even in adulthood optimal alignment of teeth for proper function and natural beauty can be achieved.

Adult Orthodontics On An Upswing: The face of orthodontics has drastically changed in the last 5 to 7 years. Over 50% of my practice is composed of adults ranging in age from 20 to 78. This is quite typical now for any orthodontic practice in the U.S.

In fact, according to a recent study, the fastest growing U.S. patient population in orthodontics is adults.

In general, people know more about dentistry, and they have come to realize that orthodontics is likely the healthiest and most cost-effective way of obtaining a beautiful smile and stable bite for them for the long term. Pankey Institute trained dentists understand that proper orthodontics can make their beautiful work on adult teeth even more beautiful and long lasting. Orthodontics enables your dentist to create a beautiful, healthy smile using your own, natural teeth. Sometimes a combination of orthodontics and reliable corrective jaw surgery is necessary on adults for the best facial and dental esthetics and functional results. The photos on this page illustrate the profile difference this combination can make. The beauty and function of the teeth were also perfected.

Advances Making Adult Orthodontics More Desirable: Incredible advances in orthodontic delivery systems have made braces much more esthetic, hygienic, fast and comfortable for adults. For example, lingual (tongue side) braces cannot be seen because they are placed behind the teeth. They have been around for years but have enjoyed recent popularity. Ceramic braces are very clear, tooth-colored braces which are remarkably translucent. Unlike the clear



This patient received a combination of orthodontics and corrective jaw surgery to obtain the best esthetic and functional results.

plastic braces, ceramic ones are impossible to discolor or stain. These braces are ultra-smooth but very strong.

Clear transparent wires are common in any modern orthodontic office now, and when clear braces are combined with these new transparent wires, you have a wonderful esthetic and efficient appliance that goes unnoticed most of the time.

"Self-ligating" braces are the "hottest" engineering advancement in traditional braces. These braces have a "sliding door" to hold the straightening wire in position on the bracket. This reduces friction and allows lower force wires to be used. This reduces the discomfort associated with tooth movement. Because these new braces



3D imaging allows the orthodontist to plan and the patient to see the transformation that will occur.

allow teeth to move in a virtually frictionless manner, treatment is faster and typically takes no more than 6 to 8 months. Recent studies suggest self-ligating braces actually help produce more bone around the teeth (a good result) while moving teeth because of the physiologic forces that are used.

CAD-CAM orthodontics is perhaps the most exciting of all. It is the use of computer-aided design technology in straightening the patient's teeth. You may have seen clear plastic, aligning trays that fit over teeth marketed on TV, under the trademark name Invisalign™.

Clear plastic appliances are arguably the most revolutionary orthodontic delivery system and are unmatched in terms of their esthetics and comfort. These trays are custom designed for the individual patient's mouth and a progressive series of them is used to advance the movement of teeth into best position. *Note:* Using this type of orthodontics may not be appropriate for every patient. I have found them to be as effective as traditional braces for up to about 25% of the patients I treat. Other types of orthodontics are more effective, depending on the arrangement of teeth and condition of tooth roots, gum tissue and supporting bone.



Find the braces ... clear braces are commonly used today.



*Invisalign
in the
mouth*

Common misconceptions include:

- I'm too old for braces.
- Braces are uncomfortable, dirty and ugly.
- All orthodontics involves metal bands and large sharp wires.
- All orthodontics is a 2-year process.
- Braces are unaffordable.

Orthodontic realities in the 21st Century:

- The majority of patients in a typical orthodontic office are adult patients
- Most adult orthodontics is of a very limited nature and can take less than 6 months.
- Modern orthodontic appliances use current engineering principles and are made of space-age titanium and ceramic materials that produce fast, comfortable and esthetic results.

- CAD-CAM based clear plastic appliances (i.e., Invisalign™) work, work well, and they are here to stay.
- Braces cost almost the same as they did 30 years ago and rarely are finances the reason people don't get treatment.

Reasons why adults choose orthodontics:

- They don't like their smile. Commonly, they have always wanted straight teeth but their parents couldn't afford treatment when they were young.
- They have an uncomfortable bite due to their teeth being misaligned and/or crowded. This has led to their teeth wearing, gum problems, and/or TMJ jaw joint problems such as headaches, neck aches, and jaw muscle pain.

Orthodontics may be appropriate for you. No matter what reason(s) you have for choosing orthodontics, **your Pankey Institute trained dentist** will thoughtfully develop a treatment plan for you, recommend treatment to achieve optimal results and refer you to appropriate specialists as needed. The best orthodontists work in collaboration with the patient's dentist to assure that optimal health, function and esthetics are restored. □

Note: The Pankey Institute has been selected by Align Technology to work with expert Invisalign™ orthodontists to develop courses for dental professionals focused on restoring comprehensive oral health.