

Myths and Truths About Orthodontics: “Invisalign: A Replacement for Braces?” PART I

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“Invisalign, what a concept?” Ads everywhere, your family dentist, magazines, the Internet touting that perfect smile **WITHOUT** those ugly braces. In fact, wearing those stupid looking braces is usually the primary reason that’s stopping many adults and older teens from getting orthodontic treatment. **“Hey, Invisalign is even removable, I can wear it only at night and no one will *ever* know I even have braces.”**

Great marketing **BUT**, is Invisalign just as good as Braces, that’s this issue’s installment of: **Myths and Truths about Orthodontics: Invisalign; A Replacement for Braces?”**

The Myth: Invisalign IS Able to Replace Braces To Completely Straighten Your Teeth. The Truth: Yes, But Not Everytime. In fact, it has been my experience, after being involved with over 200 Invisalign patients, that very seldom does Invisalign give me the same superior results that those “ugly” braces do. I will make it very clear to my patients, who are contemplating Invisalign, to **expect** at least a short time at the end of Invisalign Treatment on **needing** braces to “finish” the treatment, if you want the results that I expect for you.

“Why is that?” is the obvious question. I’m glad you asked! Invisalign “works” differently than braces and has some limitations that braces usually don’t. The reason is the Invisalign “Aligners” aren’t actually attached to the teeth as braces are. The Aligners rely on “squeezing” you’re teeth into place and are made from a clear thermo-molded plastic, which has been formed to the exact shapes of your teeth shape. Invisalign’s patented process progressively changes the location of where your teeth fit into the Aligner. As you wear each Aligner, the teeth become a little bit straighter each time, since the teeth get “squeezed” closer and closer to the projected finished position. The problem is that the closer your teeth get to that theoretical location, the less and less “squeeze” Invisalign puts on the teeth. On many occasions that “squeeze” is just not strong enough to get that “stubborn tooth” to finish that last little bit of movement that is intended. Invisalign can be altered in attempt to increase the pressure or direction of “the squeeze” but it’s been my experience that “if it doesn’t get it the first time, it never will.” On the other hand, braces are made to be progressively adjusted based on the changes since the last tightening. If the Orthodontic Specialist struggles with particular teeth becoming aligned, we compensate for it right away. The bottom line, there is more “hope” involved with Invisalign treatment verses a treatment with continual direct control; since your Doctor is working with something that can “adapt to your unique

problem.” Braces don’t require your teeth to “act” like everyone else’s to the extent that Invisalign does.

The two most common problems I have had with Invisalign are:

1. **Getting Perfectly Straight Teeth.** Close? **Yes**, absolutely they are improved compared to where they were? Are they Perfect? **Many times; No.** That much money and they aren’t Perfect. Is that what you expect?
2. **Achieving Bite Correction.** Again: Close? **Yes.** Improved? Now here’s a problem we don’t have with simply straightening. I have found that sometimes in the process of straightening the teeth, the bite does not always correct at the same time or as expected with braces or Invisalign. The advantage braces have over Invisalign is that we can constantly make course adjustments when we tighten the braces monthly. As Orthodontic Specialists, we can see what’s happening and make changes to the braces for the exact bite adjustments we want. With Invisalign, the only way to change the course of the treatment, once it’s started, is to resubmit new mouth molds to remake all the remaining Aligners. Basically meaning we are starting over from that new place in time and the old Invisalign Aligners are thrown away.

Next issue of Douglas County Living, Dr. Hamersky will give you the “Myths and Truths about Orthodontics: “The Rest of the Story on Invisalign: A Replacement for Braces?”