



Whilst certainly not a new concept, interest in adult orthodontics has increased in recent years, with more people searching for solutions to improve the appearance of their smile. 54% of women alone admitted to being so self-conscious of their teeth that they had considered braces. So, this raises the question – what types of treatment are available?

Upon hearing the word 'orthodontics', most people automatically envisage fixed, wire braces. The most common form of treatment, metal braces are bonded to the teeth to help improve alignment. They are a private option for adult patients, are available free on the NHS for teenage patients, and have an average treatment length of 24 months - though this is relative.

It is perhaps due to the recent boom in aesthetic orthodontics, paired with the (sometimes) derogatory connotations of metal braces that has left many adult patients seeking alternative solutions. This has led to developments in the dental industry, including the introduction of clear aligners.

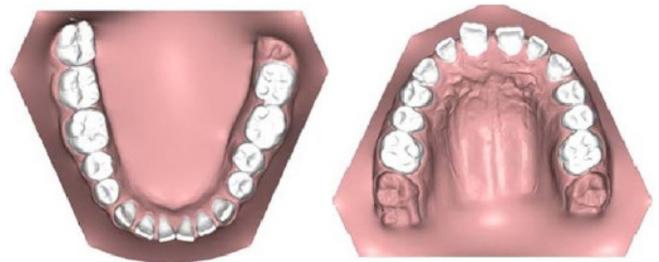
Often referred to as 'short-term' or 'cosmetic' orthodontics, clear aligners offer a solution to common problems including crowding, spacing, overbites and midline discrepancies. This patient's anterior spacing was corrected using Smilelign Clear Aligners.

Outline

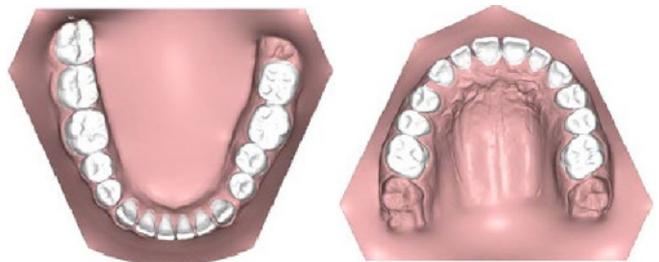
The patient contacted her dentist as she was unhappy with the diastema (spacing) in the upper arch. The degree of spacing presented was severe and the patient was keen to undertake treatment to achieve a more aesthetically pleasing smile. She desired a treatment that was relatively quick to complete and would not be disruptive to her lifestyle.

Treatment Planning

Following a discussion regarding the options available, the patient decided to move forward with clear aligners. Impressions were taken and sent to the Smilelign laboratory for consideration, along with a request to allow even spacing between all teeth in anticipation of post-treatment cosmetic build-up.



Patient's teeth pre-treatment



Patient's teeth post-treatment

The patient ...was unhappy with the spacing in her upper arch.

...taking a total of 9 months to complete, Smilelign resolved the patient's spacing concerns...

Once assessed and approved for clear aligner treatment, specialised 3D software was used to create a digital copy of the patient's teeth, which was then manipulated in order to demonstrate what could be achieved.

This was sent to the dentist for the patient's follow-up appointment. The treatment plan showcased before and after images, as well as a short video documenting the planned movements.

A pre-aligner was also provided for the patient – unique to Smilelign - to allow the dentist to check the aligner and ensure correct fit. This stage also allowed the patient to get an understanding of what the clear aligner treatment process was going to be like.

The treatment plan proposed 12 upper aligners and 8 lower, with each to be worn for a minimum of three weeks before progressing. The fit of the pre-aligner met the patient's specifications for comfort, as well as appearance.

Treatment Process

Upon approval, Smilelign made and provided the 8 lower aligners, and the first 8 upper aligners. Due to the extent of the spacing, Smilelign advised the initial 8 aligners be administered, with a review following this whereby new impressions were taken to check progress.

Outcome

Taking a total of nine months to complete, the clear aligners resolved the patient's spacing concerns, whilst also fixing the midline discrepancy. Following her final aligner, the patient had composite bonding, as well as a course of whitening to give the completed look.

Conclusion

The use of cosmetic orthodontics plays an important role for adult patients, and the general dentist. Clear aligners offer a reduction in overall treatment length, are virtually invisible to the human eye, and can also be removed to maintain excellent oral hygiene. As with all orthodontic treatment, it is important to reiterate to the patient that a retainer must be worn in order to preserve the new position of the teeth.

A UK company based in Sheffield, Smilelign manufactures clear aligners in-house using the latest software and 3D CAD/CAM technology.