

anxiety about wearing braces



Braces seemed ugly and uncomfortable, not to mention the time it would take for my teeth to move. Everyone else was having them, so ironically I was the odd one out, but I still didn't see the point. Then when I turned 21, I looked in the mirror one day and realised I'd made a big mistake.

Braces are common, especially for teenagers. In fact, in Thailand it's fashionable to wear braces, whether you need them or not! A lot of celebrities such as Tom Cruise and Estelle have worn braces, and Cindy Crawford even wore them in a Pepsi ad once.

It's the teenagers who haven't had orthodontic treatment that appear to be in the minority. Today people are more open to making the most of their appearance, with 'look good, feel good' being an increasingly common mantra. Possibly, one of the most important parts of looking and feeling good is having an attractive smile. After all your smile says a lot about you – a happy and healthy smile exudes confidence and self-esteem.

The idea of having orthodontic treatment as a teenager can still be daunting; it probably feels like you have enough going on in your life without

adding braces to the mix, but it's definitely worth it. Firstly, you don't need to worry about being the only one with braces, as you will find that the majority of your friends will also undergo orthodontic treatment at some point. Secondly, advances in technology have resulted in them being almost invisible, and the average treatment time is only between 18 months to 2 years – this is a small price to pay for a lifetime of gorgeous smiles!

There are many reasons for having treatment whilst still a teen such as it being the optimal age for achieving excellent results, which saves your teeth from worsening as you get older. Possible consequences of postponing treatment could be having braces as an adult or maybe even corrective surgery. Also, the sooner you have braces, the sooner you can reap the benefits of an attractive smile, which will make you feel better about the way you look, as well as increasing your confidence. However, orthodontic treatment is not just about a great smile, it has health benefits too, such as preventing the problems which are caused by crooked teeth. These include tooth decay and gum problems which can contribute to losing your teeth at an early age. Crooked teeth may also cause bad breath as plaque builds up in the areas which are hard to clean.

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At times you may feel like your parents are forcing you to have braces, or they keep giving you grief about taking care of them. When this happens, remind yourself that the braces are for your benefit; therefore it is important that you do your best to look after them. The most important thing to remember is that braces won't ruin your life, in fact, eventually they will make it 10 times better. So don't make the mistake I did and put off having them. Once they're on you will wonder what all the fuss was about!

5 STRAIGHT ANSWERS TO 5 COMMON QUESTIONS

1) WILL MY FRIENDS LAUGH AT ME?

It would be unusual to be laughed at or get bullied for wearing braces, most people today are aware of what they are and what their purpose is. It is also important to remember that orthodontic braces are a medical treatment and laughing at someone with braces is comparable to laughing at someone who has broken their leg and is wearing a plaster cast. If you are being bullied, then make sure that you inform a parent or responsible adult.

2) WILL IT STOP ME GETTING A BOYFRIEND OR GIRLFRIEND?

No! It will make no difference in this area of your life whatsoever. Having braces actually shows that you care about your appearance and people usually find this to be an attractive quality. Braces are so common nowadays that you may find your girlfriend or boyfriend also wears a brace.

3) CAN I STILL KISS WITH BRACES ON?

Yes and don't worry, they won't lock together!

4) WILL I HAVE TO CHANGE MY EATING HABITS?

Yes. If you were a diabetic, you wouldn't eat sweets because they could have an adverse effect on your health. For the same reasons as a brace-wearer you will have to ensure you avoid foods that can damage your teeth or braces. It is important to note that if you suffer from an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia, you will not be able to have braces until you have overcome these conditions.

5) IS CLEANING MY TEETH GOING TO BE DIFFICULT?

It will require a concerted effort to brush your teeth properly after every meal, as you will need to make sure you follow your orthodontist's advice to the letter. Doing this is in your own best interests as it prevents food getting stuck in your braces and also means that when your brace is removed your teeth are not horribly stained.

WEARING BRACES IS MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK

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