

There's an App for That

So you're a grown up now, and you regret not having worn your retainer because your teeth have shifted...there's an app for that. Your parents were not able to provide you with braces, and you've always hated your smile...there's an app for that. Your dentist has told you that your bite could really benefit from orthodontics, but you're hesitant to do anything for yourself because your kids' needs have always come first...there's even an app for that!

In today's rapidly changing world, iPhones don't have a monopoly on apps. An experienced orthodontist can provide you with a wide variety of apps – *appliances*, that is. If you are bothered by the idea of having a mouth full of metal, you need to know there are other choices. Getting an evaluation by a specialist is the best way to familiarize yourself with all the available options. Braces aren't just for kids anymore...there's an app for that.

Advances in orthodontic technology have made it possible to greatly reduce the frequency of visits, discomfort levels and even shorten treatment time. *Metal braces* are much less noticeable than years past (remember railroad tracks?), but still show more than other appliances. Singer Gwen Stefani depends on her image and her speaking/singing for her living, and she wore these. *Clear (ceramic) braces* (actor Tom Cruise wore these) are less visible than metal, but have the downside of breaking more easily. *Clear aligner tray systems*, such as Invisalign, are wonderful for certain cases but must be worn constantly to work properly. *Lingual braces* (on the back side of the teeth rather than front as conventional braces) are relatively new on the scene but are almost completely invisible. All of these appliances vary in cost, but costs and payment options would be discussed at your orthodontic evaluation.

More often than not, I find that most adults have only minor alignment issues. Believe it or not, there's an app for that! *Removable appliances* look like typical retainers, are slightly visible, removable as needed and cost about a fourth of what braces can cost. An experienced orthodontist (rather than a dentist who does orthodontics on the side) can give you treatment options tailored to meet your specific needs without giving up efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In today's economy, cost is part of every decision one makes, orthodontics included.

Whatever treatment you choose, retention is key. Teeth, just like any other part of our anatomy, change as we age. Once treatment is complete, permanent retainers would be placed that are not visible. How long do you need to wear a removable retainer at night? Orthodontists answer that with another question – how long do you want your teeth to stay straight?

So don't be *apprehensive* about seeing an orthodontist at your age. They say age is a state of mind, so just get an *appointment*, make the proper *appropriations*, and your kids will *applaud* your new *appearance*. See? There *were* apps for that.

- Carl K. Walker, D.M.D., M.S.

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