

Invisible 'Braces'

Want to straighten your teeth without having a mouth full of metal? **Chan Li Jin** speaks to Dato Dr. How Kim Chuan about transparent aligners that have revolutionised the world of orthodontics.

Anyone who has ever worn braces will tell you that it was not the best time of their lives. Braces hurt – not just the teeth but the entire face. Tedious and regular cleaning is very important, otherwise you will end up with unsightly morsels of food stuck between your metal wires.

You also feel self-conscious about smiling or laughing for the entire duration of your orthodontic treatment, usually lasting around two years. I should know: I once wore braces and I hated every moment.

The good news is that braces are no longer the only solution to beautiful, straight teeth. With Invisalign, there is now the option of having your teeth straightened without enduring metal wires in the mouth. In fact, they are so discreet no one can even tell you are undergoing orthodontic treatment!

WHAT IS INVISALIGN®?

Invisalign is short for Invisible Aligners, and that is exactly what they are.

"Instead of having metal wires fixed to your teeth, Invisalign uses transparent aligners which can hardly be seen when you have them on. These aligners are moulded to the shape of your teeth. Basically, you just need to slip them over your teeth," explains Dato Dr. How Kim Chuan, Consultant Orthodontist and President of the Malaysian Dental Association.

These aligners are worn 24/7 and their function is to slowly 'move' the teeth into line, just like braces. Every two weeks, you need to change to a new set of aligners, which your dentist or orthodontist provides at the beginning of your treatment.

"The best part about Invisalign is, of course, that it's virtually invisible. No one notices you're actually wearing aligners!" enthuses Dr. How. "But what's more exciting is that they're more comfortable and user-friendly."

The aligners can be removed when eating and for cleaning. You can take them off to brush your teeth at night before putting them on again, adds Dr. How. Like braces, Invisalign moves teeth by up to 0.25mm every two weeks. However, this high precision technology allows dentists and orthodontists to tweak the movement ratio to 0.2 - 0.125mm for patients with a low pain threshold.

"Every time a patient's braces are tightened, they usually



Dato Dr. How Kim Chuan says that Invisalign is the "future of orthodontics".



invisalign®

The Clear Alternative to Braces

Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



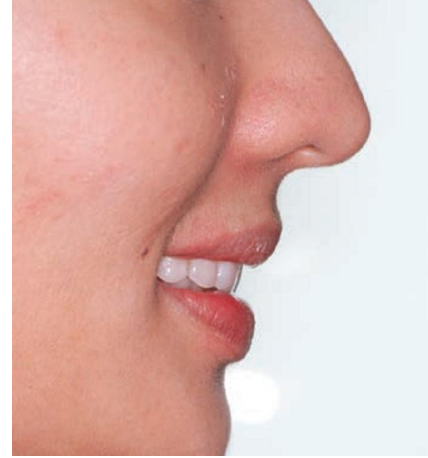
Before and after treatment with Invisalign – invisible aligners that straighten teeth.

Photos courtesy of Dato Dr. How Kim Chuan.

YOUR 12-STEP INVISALIGN EXPERIENCE

- 1) The orthodontist will first determine whether you are a suitable candidate for Invisalign. The patient's needs and preliminary treatment plan as well as treatment time and cost will be discussed during this preliminary consultation.
- 2) Once the patient has agreed to proceed, a complete set of diagnostic records will be taken. This includes radiographs of the jaw and skull, photographs of the face, teeth and smile line; an impression (mould) of the teeth will also be taken using a specialised PVS (polyvinylsiloxane) material.
- 3) The impression (mould) will be laser scanned into ClinCheck software. The orthodontist will then plan the movement of the teeth in the ClinCheck software and design the smile with optimum occlusion for the patient based on his expert knowledge and experience.
- 4) Once the proposed comprehensive treatment plan is ready, the orthodontist will save it in a movie format and present it to the patient via email and at a face to face consultation to explain it, and provide an estimated treatment time. The patient's opinion is sought and the treatment plan may be modified until the patient is fully satisfied. The treatment plan is then finalised.
- 5) Once the patient is thoroughly satisfied with the treatment plan, a written consent is obtained and the same prescription will then be emailed to Invisalign Headquarters in the United States to manufacture the aligners based on the agreed prescription. The Aligners take approximately two weeks to be shipped to the dental office.
- 6) When the aligners arrive, the orthodontist will fit them on the patient and advise the patient on the care and maintenance of the aligners. A complete kit with an education pamphlet is given to the patient.
- 7) The orthodontist will follow up with the patient closely until he/she has completely adapted to the treatment.
- 8) The patient is then given a few aligners at a time and is advised to change the aligners every two weeks. The aligners are to be worn for a minimum of 22 hours a day, and preferably 24/7.
- 9) The patient will be reviewed every six to eight weeks to ensure compliance and the orthodontist will monitor the progress of treatment closely, matching progress against the original ClinCheck treatment plan.
- 10) Should there be a discrepancy, the orthodontist will immediately rectify the problem and bring the treatment back on track.
- 11) The beauty of Invisalign is that the treatment can be carried on even when the patient is overseas, as long as the patient is compliant in wearing the aligners.
- 12) A reassuring factor is that Invisalign results are guaranteed in that if the treatment outcome is less than satisfactory, refinement procedures are available to the patient. Invisalign has been used by more than one million patients worldwide and has gained popularity rapidly. It has revolutionised orthodontics and is tipped to be the future of orthodontics.

Please always consult an Invisalign trained orthodontist to ensure safety and a successful treatment outcome.



Straight and beautiful: After treatment with Invisalign.

experience soreness for a few days to a week. But with Invisalign, the soreness is usually for the first few minutes. After that, even you won't realise they're there," says Dr. How.

OTHER BENEFITS

Function-wise, Invisalign works better than braces because they do not affect your speech, like some braces do.

Patients also feel more in control because they can see the end result of their treatment right from the start. Before beginning treatment, a virtual treatment plan shows them how each tooth will be moved and how they will look afterwards.

The flexibility is also a great plus point. For example, if your sister or best friend is getting married, you can remove the aligners for a short time.

"You can remove them for a few hours during important events, but remember to put them back on as soon as you can, or else your teeth will feel sore because they may move back to their original (crooked) position," advises Dr. How.

The cost of Invisalign treatment can range from RM15,000 to RM20,000 (US\$4,700 to US\$6,300), depending on the complexity of the case. Dr. How points out that this is approximately 40 percent less than what it costs in Korea, Taiwan and Australia.

"Once anyone has tried Invisalign, there's no way they will choose conventional braces," he states. "This is the future of orthodontics."

For more information, go to www.drhowkc.com.

FAST FACTS:

- Invisalign has been used by over 1.5 million patients worldwide
- Over 55,000 orthodontists and dentists all over the world have been trained to use Invisalign
- Aligners are made of clear, strong, medical-grade, non-toxic plastic
- Orthodontists call them 'contact lenses for teeth'.