



Do-it-yourself orthodontics

Information for patients

What is do-it-yourself (DIY) orthodontics?

A growing number of companies on the Internet are offering DIY orthodontics: braces, aligners and other products that people can use at home to straighten their teeth.

Consumers' teeth are assessed using a selfie of their smile, an imprint from a mail order kit or a 3D scan. These are reviewed by the company and then a treatment plan is formulated by the company for the consumer to follow.

This direct-to-consumer treatment is promoted as being quicker and cheaper than professional orthodontic treatment, with some companies claiming that people need never visit an orthodontist.

Why don't experts recommend it?

Orthodontics is a specialised field. To gain the ultimate goal of straight teeth there is a great deal for a dental professional to consider. Orthodontic treatment involves gradually moving the teeth and/or bone, which can affect the patient's dental health, bite and appearance. Things can potentially go wrong if patients are treated without being thoroughly examined, diagnosed, and supervised by a qualified dental professional.

Peak bodies for dentists and orthodontists in Australia and overseas strongly advise patients not to undergo at-home orthodontic treatments. Experts warn that DIY treatments could worsen existing dental problems, lead to costly remedial treatment and even cause tooth loss and permanent damage to the teeth, gums, jaw joints or jaws.

Some companies use the selling point that cases are reviewed by orthodontists. But those orthodontists might not be in Australia or fully qualified and it's important to bear in mind that not every country has orthodontists whose standards are as high as ours and with the same level of expertise. Australian orthodontists must have a university dentistry degree, as well as a three-year specialist post-graduate degree in orthodontics. They must also be registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, which sets national standards and works to protect the public.

What do experts recommend?

ADA NSW does not support DIY orthodontics. Assessment and diagnosis in person, with close ongoing supervision, is the key to successful orthodontic treatment and management.

Anyone considering braces or aligners should undergo a full clinical examination

by a qualified, experienced, registered dental professional to determine if orthodontic treatment is right for their particular treatment needs and goals.

People should be aware of the different types of orthodontic treatments and appliances available and the advantages and risks of each.

Patients should seek treatment from a qualified, experienced, registered dentist or orthodontist, with regular visits during treatment for close monitoring and supervision.

Are braces or aligners right for me?

The first step in determining whether braces or aligners are the right option for you, is to visit a qualified, Australian-registered orthodontist or dentist. They will identify if orthodontic treatment is right for you and detect any underlying issues that could affect orthodontic treatment, such as problems with the bone around the teeth, gum disease, cavities or broken fillings.

The treating dental practitioner will carry out all necessary clinical examinations, diagnostic scans and x-rays to determine a suitable course of treatment and will supervise patients throughout their care.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT DIY ORTHODONTICS

- Are my teeth and gums healthy enough to begin orthodontic treatment? When was the last time I had a routine check-up with a dentist?
- Am I comfortable starting treatment without being personally examined by a qualified dental professional? What if I have dental issues that I am not aware of?
- Am I comfortable starting treatment without comprehensive diagnostic records such as x-rays being taken?
- If only one type of treatment is being offered, how do I know that treatment is right for my individual needs?
- Is my case reviewed by an adequately trained dentist or orthodontist? If so, where are they based and what qualifications do they have?
- What are the possible health and financial risks associated with DIY orthodontic treatment? If problems arise during treatment, how will they be detected and who is responsible for correcting them?
- What recourse do I have if the treatment is not successful, if I am injured during treatment or if other problems arise? All registered dentists and orthodontists in Australia must hold appropriate insurance to protect patients.

WHAT DO OTHER PEAK BODIES RECOMMEND?

"Healthcare is the last place you should go bargain hunting. Mail order orthodontic services are sold at a fraction of the price for a reason, and many people are discovering that fast and cheap is not the solution for a healthy and attractive smile in the long term. Orthodontic procedures performed without professional supervision can lead to disappointing results and may cause lasting damage to your teeth and gums."

Australian Society of Orthodontists

<https://orthodonticsaustralia.org.au/human-orthodontist/>

"The unanimity shown by European orthodontists on this subject makes it clear that orthodontics is more than just aligning the front teeth. It is about a holistic approach to care where the patient's best interests are at the heart of our treatments."

British Orthodontic Society

<https://bos.org.uk/uncategorized/bos-joins-european-consensus-diy-orthodontics-is-hazardous-for-patients/>

"We strongly discourage even the consideration of any mail-order orthodontic treatment due to the potential risks involved. While it may seem like you are getting a good deal, there are a lot of risks involved that could cause serious problems for your mouth and teeth."

American Association of Orthodontists

<https://aaoinfo.org/resources/at-home-orthodontics/>