



Orthodontic Aligners? Braces?

Maybe Both.

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Straight teeth and a beautiful smile might be a goal for the new year. But should you do clear orthodontic aligners or braces? The answer is: maybe both. Hybrid treatment is where one arch (upper or lower) is treated with braces and the opposing arch with aligners. Or, you may start in braces and finish in aligners—the best of both treatments.

Significant scientific research is coming out on clear orthodontic aligners, highlighting tooth movements that aligners execute well, and tooth movements that are less successful. Benefits of aligner therapy are: patient comfort, cleansibility, esthetics, and patient control on being able to remove the aligners. Patient control can backfire into a lack of patient compliance and the teeth not moving because of it. Orthodontists can often predict who is a good candidate for aligners based on the direction their teeth need to move and willingness of the patient to cooperate. It is recommended that only water be consumed with aligners on, and they need to be worn at least 22 hours per day. Most patients wear each set of aligners one to two weeks each before switching to the next set.

Clear or metal braces can achieve almost every tooth movement, and braces remove the patient compliance (for the most part). Since braces are temporarily adhered to the teeth, patients don't have to remember to put them on or keep track of them like clear aligners. Braces can be more visible and more time consuming to clean than aligners, but patients can eat and drink with them on, unlike restrictions with aligners. Some patients report fewer speech disturbances with braces than aligners.

Depending on the individual patient and his or her orthodontic needs, sometimes braces and aligners need to be used together, or in tandem, to achieve straight teeth and an ideal bite. As a result, most orthodontists offer customized, hybrid orthodontic treatment. If you want to straighten your teeth, discuss the benefits of each therapy with your orthodontist to determine if aligners, braces, or both would be best for you.



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