



## **Getting It Straight**

**by Dr. Kirk Christensen**

**Woodstock's Orthodontic Specialist**

**Q: *I see a lot of ads for invisible removable braces. Do they work as well as regular braces?***

**A:** No, generally they don't. The two major companies you have seen on TV have marketed their "invisible aligners" in a similar fashion to "weight loss with no diet or exercise". Of course, most people will relish the thought of no irritating, food trapping and metallic looking fixed "braces" (conventional brackets and bands). Unfortunately, there is a lot they don't tell you.

!A new catch phrase in the health professions is Evidence Based Medicine, meaning treatment should be based on scientific fact. An investigation published in the Journal of the Amer. Dental Assoc. found no scientific studies (evidence) that aligners have equal results as "braces" or even to know to what degree they are effective. See this link:

<http://jada.ada.org/cgi/content/full/136/12/1724?ck=nck>

!Clinical results show plastic aligners have the ability to align "crooked" teeth, but they are limited to very simple crowding cases, are not as accurate in tooth positioning or space closure, and cannot fix an incorrect bite as only conventional braces can. Frequently, aligner cases need to be completed with standard braces to get a bite corrected. That alone, reveals the weakness of the product.

!If it were not for dental practice laws, you could probably order your own aligners on E-bay. The company lab makes a series of trays from your dental impressions. General dentists like aligners because they can offer teeth straightening without orthodontic training or special supplies and instruments. Some orthodontists advertise aligners to stay competitive with what the public thinks it needs, but I have not met one orthodontic specialist that would throw away their brackets and wires for aligners. Fees for aligners vary between practices, some are as much, or more, than braces. If looks are important to you, consider ceramic (clear fixed braces) uppers and a better result for your hard earned money. Ultimately, it's how your teeth look AFTER orthodontics, not during!

Dr. Christensen's column appears bi-weekly in the Northwest Herald. Questions to be answered and treatment inquiries may be directed to:

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