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TEMPLE CITY DENTAL CARE

Invisalign orthodontic care is one of the coolest innovations I've seen in dentistry. Seriously, straight teeth and no metal braces? What a concept! Within the very first few months of my providing patients Invisalign care, something happened that I'll never forget. I saw a life transform. And it was easy (these days, it's even easier.)

But I should have known better. After all, orthodontic care had changed my own life and career forever as well.

Before my own teeth straightening experience, I actually used to instinctively posture my hand in front of my mouth while speaking. Looking back, I can't help but wonder how anyone without super canine-type audio reception ever knew what I was talking about.

Invisalign care was founded in 1997, given FDA approval in 1998 and made available to general dentists in 2002. To date, almost two million patients have benefitted from Invisalign.

When Invisalign certification was offered to GPs, it took me about 73 seconds to sign up.

I still think of Diana every single time we begin Invisalign care.

Diana had won a free TCDC Zoom! Teeth Whitening at a monthly Pasadena Chamber breakfast raffle. And after a while, she made the drive down Baldwin for her new brighter smile.

And the results looked great...with the exception of one poorly positioned upper front tooth confined to the background not unlike crazy Uncle Harold in a Thanksgiving family photo.

Diana helped head up a local non-profit; her children were all grown up; her family had always come first...but she admitted she'd hated that tooth for at least 30 years.

But Diana didn't want braces. "What if we could straighten that tooth without braces? What if we could use appliances that are virtually invisible?" "Can you really do that?"

I still attend the monthly Pasadena Chamber breakfasts. Sometimes the scrambled eggs are uninspired and there are more chiropractors around than dentists in the state of Nebraska.

But I still really love the experience, especially when Diana confidently stands and delivers her 20-second commercial (to an attentive group of about one hundred or so)...beaming.

Q. What Is Invisalign and How Does It Work?

Invisalign takes a modern approach to straightening teeth, using a custom-made series of aligners. The aligner trays are made of smooth, comfortable and virtually invisible plastic worn over your teeth. Wearing the aligners gradually and gently shifts your teeth into place; the aligners are changed every 2-3 weeks. There are no metal brackets and no wires to tighten; Invisalign is metal-free. The aligners are removed for eating and oral hygiene and worn at least twenty-two hours per day. Almost two million people have benefitted from Invisalign care.

Q. What are some differences between traditional orthodontics and Invisalign?

Invisalign aligners are clear and removable; traditional braces are metallic and fixed. The average length of treatment for Invisalign is nine months to one year compared to 2-3 years for traditional orthodontics. Invisalign care is appropriate for about 80% of diagnosed malocclusions/poor teeth alignment. Invisalign offers far less risk to patients who are vulnerable to tooth decay and periodontal disease, the approach allows for total oral hygiene access (and...straight teeth are engineered to be self-cleansing and better balanced to not wear down long-term.)

Q. Does Invisalign hurt?

I like this one. Nope. There aren't any sharp edges or points and the clear aligners are easily adjusted or smoothed (in the unlikely event an adjustment is necessary.) When a new aligner is fitted, there's a measure of pressure or tightness that lasts for about a day. And what's really awesome is being able to clearly track your progress each visit just by looking up at the screen and the Invisalign website. The start-to-finish process is established and visibly accessible from start to finish of care.

Q. What about the cost?

Only your doctor can determine the cost of your specific care. And the variables include the result you want, the care you'll need, and how long it will take. In the U.S., the cost of Invisalign treatment ranges from \$3,500-\$8,000 (same as traditional orthodontics), with the national average at about \$5,000. For very simple cases (5 aligners and less) the cost can be as little as \$2,500 or less. Many dental insurance plans cover Invisalign just as they would traditional orthodontics. Interest-free financing for up to 2-years can reduce monthly payments to slightly more than \$200 per month. Flexible Spending Accounts can also be very helpful in fitting the care within your budget.

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