



Delta Dental of Washington

Usage of Adult Braces is Trending Higher

It's not just a Zoom Boom fueling the uptick in adults using orthodontics

SEATTLE – Aug. 15, 2024 – Remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic led to a so-called “Zoom Boom” for adults getting braces to help fix their smiles. Remote work was the norm at the time and adults suddenly found themselves staring at their own teeth – and that of their co-worker’s – in a much more intimate way during video calls.

The gradual return to the office – and less online meetings – post-COVID hasn’t slowed the significant uptick in adults looking for help straightening their smile. According to the [American Association of Orthodontists](#), nearly one-third of all braces wearers are adults, which is up from 20% in 2019.

“Orthodontic treatment is just as effective for adults as kids and doesn’t have to be overly noticeable,” said Kyle Dosch, DDS, Delta Dental of Washington’s dental director and member dentist. “Today’s ortho is more streamlined, more comfortable and can be less visible than the appliances many adults wore growing up.”

Your teeth can be straightened at any age and the benefits are both aesthetic and functional, making improvements which last a lifetime. Depending on how complex the situation is for the patient, the process might only take a few months while comprehensive treatment can take much longer.

How do I know if I need braces?

The reason for getting braces as an adult isn’t necessarily just cosmetic. Orthodontic treatment can help correct common changes that happen as we age including crowding of the bottom teeth, spacing between the upper front teeth, bite issues, or relapse since having braces years before.

What types of braces are available?

The most common types of braces are traditional metal braces, ceramic braces and lingual braces. Technology has improved many things in our lives and braces are one of them.

Traditional metal braces are made of brackets and heat-activated wire which move teeth more quickly and less painfully than in the past. These braces tend to be the least expensive type, but also the most noticeable.

Self-ligating braces are similar to traditional braces but use a built-in system to secure the wire to the brackets rather than elastic bands or metal ties. The main benefits to these types of

braces are shorter orthodontist visits, easier cleaning and less discomfort. Some risks include bracket failure, which then requires longer orthodontist visits and longer treatment plans. Research does not show whether these types of braces work any better than traditional braces.

Ceramic braces are made of clear or enamel-colored brackets which are the same size and shape as traditional braces, but they are transparent and more discreet. On the flip side, they tend to be more expensive and can visibly stain if not properly cared for.

Lingual braces are the same as traditional metal braces, but they are placed on the back of the teeth reducing their visibility. They tend to be more expensive because of this and they are more difficult to clean.

[Aligners are a popular product for adults currently.](#) They are removable, which gives the wearer the ability to take them off when they eat or drink, though they typically must be worn at least 22 hours a day. The ability to take them off does make them popular, but it also can make it easier to lose them.

Those with aligners, such as *Invisalign*, are also discouraged from drinking soft drinks, flavored water or sports drinks because liquid seeps into aligners and if they contain acid, sugar or both, it can rapidly lead to staining of the teeth and development of tooth decay.

How do braces work?

Braces work by applying pressure to your teeth over a period of time, encouraging your ligaments and bones around them to move in a specific direction. This process is known as remodeling and as your teeth move over time, your jaws gradually reshape as well.

There may be some discomfort with orthodontic movement and remodeling, but it is temporary, and your dentist or orthodontist can help mitigate this for you.

How long do most adults have to wear braces?

There is no standard timeline for orthodontic treatments, but according to the [American Association of Orthodontists](#) patients with mildly misaligned teeth will take around eight to 12 months, while more complex cases may take a few years to finish treatment.

While the time frame may seem daunting, it is worth it to improve your smile and align your teeth to protect against future issues.

How much do braces cost for adults?

Cost depends on many factors including whether your dental plan covers braces. Most dental insurance providers, like Delta Dental of Washington, offer [online tools](#) which can provide parents with an average price range based on where they live. The general cost for out-of-network charges in the state of Washington is \$6,400-\$8,000. Many dental offices offer payment plans, so be sure and ask about those as needed. You can learn more about what plans [Delta Dental of Washington offers here.](#)

For more information about oral health, visit Delta Dental of Washington's [blog](#).

About Delta Dental of Washington

Founded 70 years ago by Seattle area dentists who set out to revolutionize oral health care, an innovative program was developed to provide longshoremen's children access to dental care –

and the concept of dental benefits was born. Today [Delta Dental of Washington](#), a not-for-profit, is the state's leading dental benefits provider covering nearly 4 million people statewide and beyond.

Through corporate philanthropy, oral health advocacy, and funding the [Arcora Foundation](#), Delta Dental of Washington plays a vital role in making dental care more equitable and accessible, increasing dental health education with an emphasis on youth, and expanding diversity at all levels within the dental profession. These collective efforts aim to improve oral health care in Washington so all people can enjoy good oral and overall health with no one left behind. Delta Dental of Washington is part of the Delta Dental Plans Association, consisting of 39 independent, affiliated member companies. For more information, visit: www.deltadentalwa.com.