

Is Invisalign® right for my teenager? Five important questions to ask before you decide.

Over the years, braces have become a middle and high school Rite of Passage. After which, the ugly duckling teenager has a “glow-up”- the braces and glasses are shed, contacts go in, and the sparkling straight teeth are revealed. Not to mention the invention of hair straighteners and concealer make-up! It’s the ultimate coming of age transformation!

Recently, however, some pre-teens and teenagers are asking to skip the traditional metal braces, and minimize the dramatic makeover experience. More and more, I see kids asking for Invisalign®, which has traditionally been marketed to adults as the easier, more esthetic alternative to traditional orthodontic braces.

Before you and your teen decide which orthodontic treatment is the right one, take the time to ask these 5 important questions:

1. Does my orthodontist recommend Invisalign® for my child?

Not all orthodontic problems are suited to Invisalign® treatment. Growth issues of the jaws, extreme crowding or spacing, and other severe problems are typically treated best with traditional braces. Your orthodontist will be able to guide you to what modality is best.

2. Does your teen want to minimize the look of braces?

If your teenager wants people to know they have braces, or use colors to decorate the braces, Invisalign® is not for them. Some kids love the idea of flashing their silvery grin, with colors to match their mood. Invisalign® is clear and does not show.

3. What is your teen’s responsibility level?

Invisalign® works by slow and steady pressure of the clear trays on the teeth. In order for them to work in the prescribed amount of time, the trays must be worn 22-24 hours per day! Removal of the trays are allowed only for eating and brushing. If your teen easily keeps up with their books and phone, and doesn't have a habit of leaving things behind or losing things, they will likely be able to manage Invisalign® treatment, which takes a great deal of personal commitment.

4. Does my teenager have good oral hygiene?

One of the major advantages of Invisalign® is the ability to take out the trays in order to brush and floss. Kids who struggle with brushing properly, as well as those with weaker enamel and those who are more cavity prone, may benefit from have a removable appliance versus fixed (glued-on) braces.

5. What about wearing Invisalign® while playing sports?

Teens who play sports can use Invisalign® since it will act as a type of mouth guard. However, for contact sports like football, that require a special heavy-duty mouthguard, Invisalign® may not be the ideal treatment, since the trays would have to be left out during practice and games, which would prevent efficient movement and lengthen treatment times.