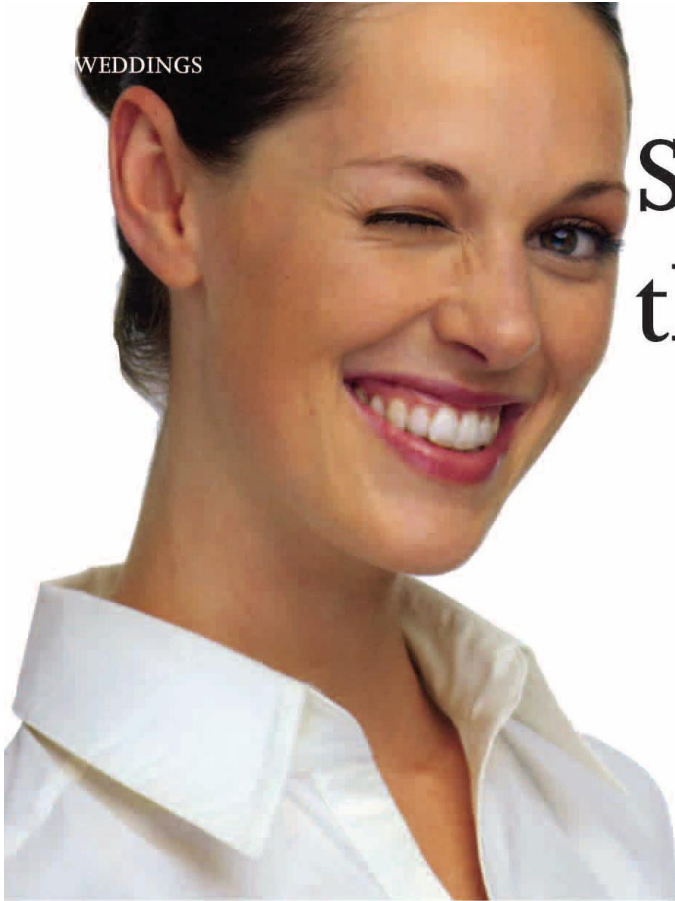


WEDDINGS



Smile for the camera

As the all important bride, the last thing you want is to spend the day blushing about the state of your teeth. With her wedding day fast approaching,

Alice Eaton booked into Angle House Orthodontics in Edgware to try out a new treatment for adults that promises the perfect smile

AS a bride-to-be, you will want to leave nothing to chance. Hair, make-up, spray tan and the all-important bridal gown are crucial to ensuring you look fabulous on the big day, but what about your smile? Having crooked or overcrowded teeth can really knock your confidence and, if like most of us, you are not blessed with perfect pearly whites, smiling for the camera might not come so easily, however overjoyed you are feeling that you have bagged your Mr Right.

With my summer wedding fast approaching, I was keen to make sure I was looking my best when the day finally arrived and that meant correcting my crooked teeth. Despite wearing fixed braces as a teenager, over the years, a combination of natural movement and the arrival of wisdom teeth had undone much of the good work, leaving my front teeth slightly overlapping. But while wearing a mouth full of metal hadn't bothered me at 15, at the grand age of 30, it just wasn't an option.

That's when I heard about Invisalign – a revolutionary orthodontic treatment for adults that promises a virtually invisible way of achieving the perfect smile. Patients are given a series of plastic aligners, rather like a clear gumshield, that they change every two weeks to gradually move the teeth into the desired position. The treatment is only suitable for adult teeth that are fully erupted, so for patients from the age of around 15 upwards and a course usually takes between 12 and 18 months depending on the condition of the teeth.

It all sounded like the perfect alternative to conventional braces and, after an initial consultation to check my suitability for the treatment (if extractions are needed, patients will require a fixed brace of some sort as well as Invisalign), I wasted no time starting

the process. To begin with I had comprehensive impressions taken of my teeth which were sent off to a lab in America. Here, they use advanced 3-D computerised technology to create a DVD of my teeth showing them at every stage of the treatment. This really is clever stuff and at my next appointment I gazed open-mouthed as my orthodontist, the very capable Dr Popat, paused, fast forwarded and rewound footage of my teeth at every angle and at every stage of the treatment. The beauty of this technology is that patients know the exact end date of their treatment and how they will look from month to month so there are no nasty surprises along the way.

In my case, the adjustments would take just four and a half months and, following a short wait, nine aligners, each made precisely to my own specifications, arrived back from the States and I was ready for the fitting.

I have to admit to a certain amount of trepidation as I sat in the chair waiting for the first aligner to be unwrapped but once the shield was slotted neatly over my teeth, I couldn't believe how invisible it actually was. I even made friends look up close and they still couldn't see it.



Wearing the brace took a few days to get used to but the discomfort was minimal, even when swapping to the next aligner. You can't eat food or drink (except water) with the shield in but Invisalign supplies a handy little case to keep it safe during mealtimes. Patients are required to return periodically to the clinic to check that progress is still on track but, apart from that, the treatment has very little effect on your day to day life. And, if you have a particularly important meeting or special occasion, you can take a break from wearing the aligner, although you do need to wear them as prescribed by your orthodontist in order to achieve the results in the given timescale.

"As there are no wires or brackets and the aligners are custom made for the patient, there is reduced irritation to your gums and mouth – it's a bit like soft lenses for the mouth," explains Dr Popat.

"And because it can be removed for eating and special occasions, you don't have to change what you eat, unlike fixed braces which are fitted for the full duration of the treatment and diet needs to be modified to avoid breaking them."

So after just 18 weeks of eating what I liked and wearing my braces virtually undetected, I was left with a perfectly straight set of teeth and a Cheshire cat grin to prove it. Now I can look forward to my wedding knowing I will have a wide smile on my face for the whole day.

Angle House Orthodontics is a practice limited to orthodontics for children and adults and has branches in Chingford, Crouch End, Edmonton, Edgware and Enfield. To book an appointment with Dr Popat, call 020 8952 4596. Visit www.anglehouseorthodontics.co.uk to find out more. Dr Popat also works from the Chorleywood Orthodontic and Wellbeing Centre (01923 283461). A course of Invisalign starts from £3,500.

For more information on Invisalign itself, visit www.invisalign.com.

Before Invisalign treatment:



Patient photo



Treatment model

After 15 months' Invisalign treatment:



Patient photo



Treatment model