

Stars *and steel*

Usually the reserve of spotty teenagers, orthodontic braces have become the latest - and most unlikely must-have accessory for celebrities, writes Liane Voisey.

Tom Cruise, Faye Dunaway and Lisa, formerly from the pop group Steps, have all been spotted with metal-mouthed smiles. But would you wear braces as an adult to correct your teeth? A recent survey discovered that nearly 85 per cent of us believe that bad teeth can ruin your appearance, but most people still say that they would avoid wearing braces. That's hardly surprising considering the unattractive 'train track' braces we remember from our childhood, but orthodontic technology has vastly improved since then.



Tom Cruise

What do braces do?

Braces can help correct 'goofy' teeth, spaced-out teeth and teeth that do not meet properly when you bite together. Brackets are cemented to the teeth and these are connected by wire forming a brace, which helps move the teeth into the right position over a period of time. You will usually need to see your orthodontist every two weeks to a month for check ups, to have your braces tightened or to have new ones fitted. Experts say that you can usually expect to wear braces for 18 months to two years, but times will vary according to the treatment you are receiving. Once your fixed braces have been removed, you may have to wear retainers to complete the treatment - these can be taken out while you are eating or cleaning your teeth and are necessary to help your teeth 'settle' into their new position after the permanent braces have been removed. If your mouth is overcrowded with too many teeth, you may need to have some teeth removed before the braces are fitted. After wearing braces, teeth will not only be more attractive, but they will also be easier to clean, helping to reduce the risk of gum disease.

A new trend

Thanks to celebrity endorsements, dentists claim that the number of adults having braces will get larger as more people realise what is available to them.

Having braces need not mean losing out on the style stakes either. . .

Gold - Gold-coloured metal braces are a different, classier alternative to the boring silver stainless steel version.

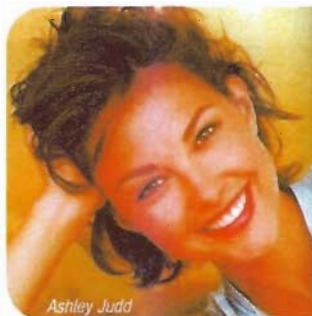
Ceramic - The brackets fixed to your teeth are the same colour as your teeth so only the wire is noticeable.

Lingual - This is a brace that is fixed to the inside of your teeth rather than the outside so it is hardly noticeable - although not everyone is suitable for this type of brace.

Invisible - The Invisalign brace is virtually invisible and about to be launched

nationwide. Made of clear plastic, it fits over all 32 of your adult teeth, so if you had any teeth removed for previous dental work, you may not be suitable for this.

Children's orthodontic treatment is free up to the age of 18. Adult orthodontic treatment can cost anywhere between £500 to £5,000. The Invisalign brace costs between £2,500 and £3,500.



Ashley Judd

Stars sporting tracks

Ashley Judd, actress
Faye Dunaway, actress
Tom Cruise, film actor
Nicholas Cage, film actor
Lisa Scott-Lee, ex-Steps singer
Gwen Stefani, lead singer from No Doubt
Amanda Wakeley, fashion designer

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