



dental braces (orthodontic treatment) demystified

By Dr Farayi Shakespeare Moyana

DENTAL SURGEON & ORTHODONTICS-Primary Care Practitioner

BDS (SA); MPH (SA); B.ED (Adult) (UZ); MBA (ZOU); PGDD (Ortho)(PRET.);AFO Ortho Cert. (India)

BOY - BEFORE AND AFTER TREATMENT



Before Treatment



After Treatment



Dr F S Moyana

Life demands that matters to do with health be placed uppermost on one's list of priorities. For one to feel confident, they must look good. This might prove to be difficult if one cannot trust their smile, has bad breath, cavities, loose teeth, bleeding or inflamed gums with food particles collecting in between teeth.

Regular visits to the dentist are important for ensuring one's dental wellbeing. One of the causes of poor dental health is dental malocclusion, which can be present as crooked teeth, open bite, deep bite, jutting out of upper front teeth, crowded/bunched up teeth in the front, narrow tooth arches, 'drifted teeth', space shortage, and extra-big teeth, among other indications.

Normal or good alignment of teeth not only contributes to optimum oral health but also goes a long way in the overall well being, confidence and a positive personality of an individual.



The following are some of the most notable consequences of bad alignment of teeth (malocclusions):

- i. Poor facial appearance (which may lead one to lose confidence and well being/or even depression)
- ii. Risk of tooth decay due to crowding of teeth & predisposition to gum disease later in life
- iii. Risk of trauma to severely "jutting out" front teeth especially during play, sport or an accidental fall

iv. Bad alignment of teeth may lead to problems with swallowing, speech and breathing while asleep (some cases of snoring have even been associated with tooth crowdedness)

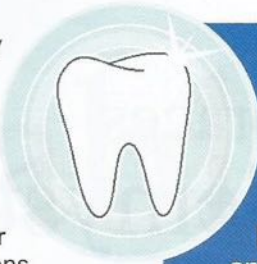
v. Joint problems: a joint in front of the ear, called the TMJ in dental jargon, may be adversely affected later in life, leading to possible pain, especially in cases of orthodontic problems presenting with deep bites.

Dental braces (orthodontic treatment) are typically used in a variety of cases with bad tooth alignment. The two biggest challenges with orthodontic treatment are that it is a long term treatment procedure, lasting for several months and for this reason it requires strong commitment from child and parent alike and secondly it is relatively expensive; even by international standards. There is hardly any medical aid which covers the total cost.

(Next page 10)



This is why early detection of badly aligned teeth is essential. Interceptive orthodontics in young growing children is often less expensive, treatment is of shorter duration and it lessens need and possibilities of more extensive and expensive orthodontic treatment later in life. It is becoming a universal recommendation that children between 7 and 10 years should have an orthodontic evaluation by an orthodontist or a dental practitioner with special skills in orthodontics.



In orthodontic treatment good oral hygiene (brushing, flossing) and proper eating habits according to instructions from the dentist or Orthodontist are a must. Treatment typically starts off by the taking of specialized x-rays, tooth models, and pictures of the face and teeth.

A contract is often drawn out and appropriate motivational sessions arranged. Braces work by slowly moving and shifting teeth into new and good positions by applying light pressure. Bands, wires and elastics are placed on the teeth to move them in the right direction. This takes place slowly and carefully over an extended period of time, months or years.

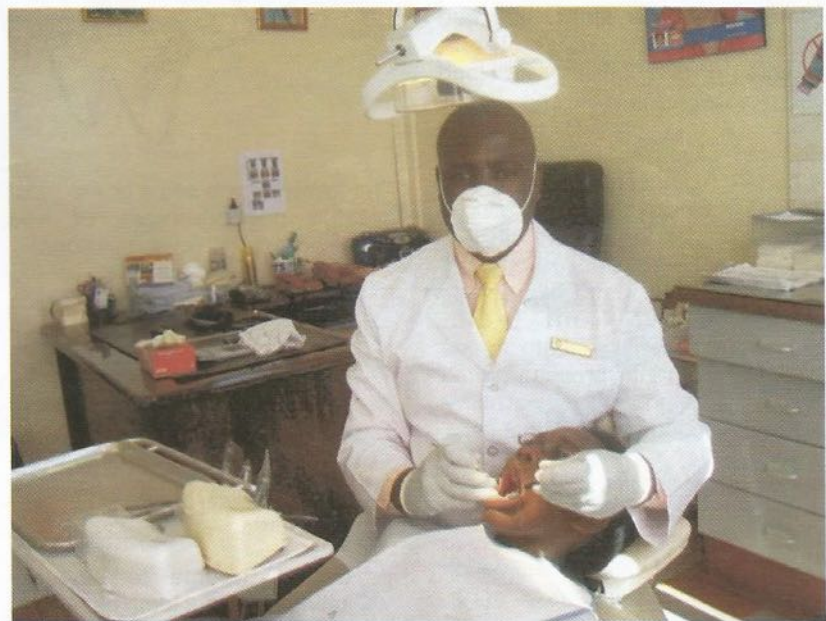
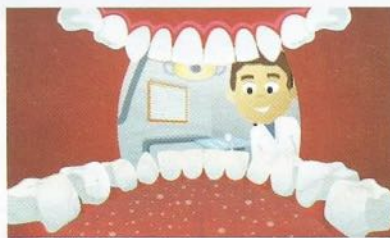
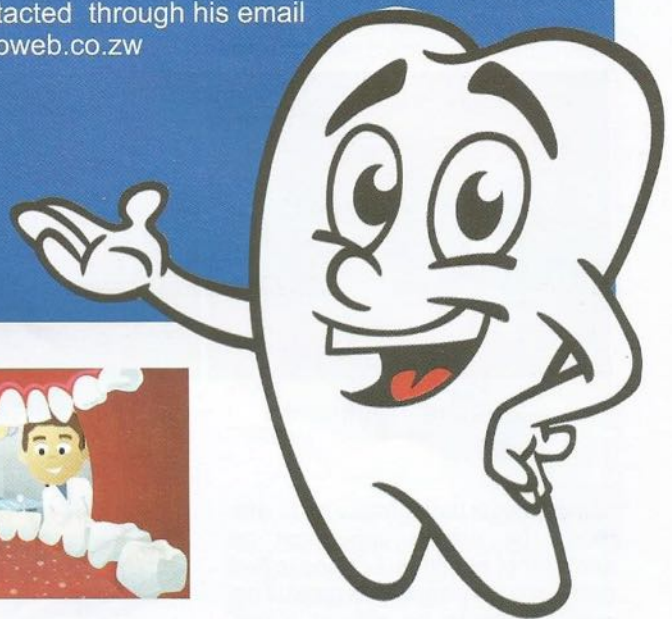
It is important to continue wearing the braces or appliance for however long your dentist or orthodontist recommends for a successful outcome. If you quit at any point during treatment, the teeth can shift back into their old bad positions. Braces comprise a number of separate components brought altogether to work as a unit with regular appointments for adjustments at 2 to 6 week intervals. The most important components are: brackets (cemented on each tooth), bands (commonly on each first molar), arch wires (connects each tooth via brackets and bands), elastics (adapts arch wire firmly to each tooth or co-ordinates upper and lower jaws). 

Dr. Farayi Shakespeare Moyana, with over 20 years combined experience in dentistry, is a local independent dentist with a special interest in dental health education via a diverse media.

He has a special passion for preventive, interceptive and corrective orthodontic treatment (dental braces) in young people.

He also holds post-graduate degrees and diplomas in Public Health, Business Administration, Adult Education and Orthodontics.

He can be contacted through his email fsmoyana@ecoweb.co.zw



Dr F S Moyana treating a patient in his surgery

 (previous page 10)