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NO MORE 'METAL MOUTH'

Advancements in braces have young, old patients grinning from ear-to-ear

BY JANE PETERSON
Of the Oakland Press

Proudly flashing his smile, Frank Wilder isn't what most people would consider a typical patient with braces.

"I've always wanted straight teeth. I put two

kids in braces and always wanted to do this," the 64-year-old Royal Oak resident said. "I didn't have to do this. I really wanted to do this."

Many teens—and their parents—may initially cringe when they receive the news that braces are recommended. But over the years, braces have

changed with brackets that are smaller and wires that are more pliable because they are activated by body heat. As a result, clunky "metal mouth" braces that some parents remember are no longer the norm for their children.

New techniques and appliances also are making braces more convenient to take care of by decreasing the frequency of dental visits and shortening overall treatment time, said John Dumas, DDS.

Dumas, who practices at Tyler/Dumas/Reyes Specialists in Orthodontics, which has offices in Birmingham and Rochester Hills, said there are a number of options available to patients today, including metal and translucent braces with brackets that blend in with the color of teeth, as well as transparent aligners designed for improving some cases of misaligned teeth.

The transparent aligners with the brand name Invisalign, for example, are

clear retainers designed to straighten teeth without braces. The clear trays are popular with adults and older adolescents, Dumas said. The process involves making an impression of the teeth which is generated into a 3-D image. From this, a step-by-step plan is developed using a series of the clear trays to achieve the desired end result, he said.

Self-ligating braces remove the source of friction between the wire and brackets, allowing teeth to move freely and respond quickly, Dumas said. This technology allows patients to typically enjoy longer times between dental appointments for adjustments, he said.

The average amount of time a patient will wear braces is 14–18 months, Dumas said. Years ago the treatment length was 24 months or more, he added.

Dumas said he and the other dental professionals in his office go to many continuing education events and read journals to keep abreast of the latest products and treatments.

“There are things we



Dr. John Dumas, DDS (left), talks about an X-ray with patient Frank Wilder of Royal Oak at Tyler/Dumas/Reyes Specialists in Orthodontics in Birmingham.

are doing now that we weren't doing six months ago," he said.

Tyler/Dumas/Reyes also has embraced technology in its office environment by focusing on team dentistry and techniques geared to making it more efficient, so patients can go about their daily life and achieve the end result as quickly as possible, Dumas said.

“It's everybody coming together for the benefit of the patient. It's a team approach,” he said.

Dentists can communicate with the office by logging into a database with a secure password

and reviewing photos, records and X-rays of their patients without them being in the office. As a result, to the patient it's a seamless process, Dumas said.

Patients can also log on with a password and payments online, as well confirm appointments.

As this makes the news that braces are needed perhaps a little easier to take.

Wilder said he is more outgoing with his braces.

He said that he always had crooked teeth, but that many people didn't even realize it.

“I didn't smile very often because of that,”

he said.

Now, he looks forward to visits to see how his teeth have changed. He said he can tell the difference the braces have made.

“I'm happy I did this. I'm now smiling,” Wilder said.

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