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A Study to Smile About

New Study Shows Record Number of Adults are Seeking Orthodontic Treatment

St. Louis – January 28, 2016 – It’s never too late for a healthy, beautiful smile. A new study shows that adults are seeking orthodontic treatment in record numbers.

From 2012 to 2014, adults seeking treatment from orthodontists in the U.S. and Canada increased **16 percent**, resulting in a record high of 1,460,000 patients ages 18 and older, according to the American Association of Orthodontists’ (AAO) “Economics of Orthodontics” survey of 2014.

The study was conducted for the AAO by the independent research firm, Loyalty Research Center. The AAO estimates that 27 percent of all U.S. and Canadian orthodontic patients are adults.

“When we speak to many of our adult patients about their experience with orthodontics, their only regret is not starting treatment sooner,” says Morris N. Poole, DDS, president of the AAO.

“Thanks to innovative technology and techniques, many adults are pleasantly surprised when they learn about today’s treatment options, which can be almost imperceptible. It’s a common misconception that orthodontic care is just for adolescents. We have data* showing that adults report improvements in their professional and personal lives after completing orthodontic treatment.”

Dr. Poole credits the growing number of adults in treatment to the widespread understanding that a healthy, beautiful smile lends itself to social and professional success. “Many adults opt for treatment because of the dual benefits of an improved smile and oral health,” says. “Orthodontics imparts life-long benefits and boosts confidence in many areas of life, from giving a presentation at work to feeling more comfortable in a one-on-one conversation.”

The affordability of treatment, Dr. Poole adds, is an added benefit. Most orthodontists offer a variety of payment options. They can include interest-free in-house financing, payment plans with or without down payments, payment in full at the beginning of treatment with a discount, or bank or other financing.

No referral is necessary to see an orthodontist. Further savings include complimentary or low-cost initial consultations. Dental insurance can offset a portion of the fee for treatment. Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) can be used for orthodontic treatment, as well. “Orthodontists work with patients to help them fit orthodontic treatment into their budgets,” Dr. Poole says.

Healthy teeth can be moved at any age, and patients of all ages seek out orthodontists, who are dentistry’s specialists in orthodontic care, for their expertise in straightening teeth and aligning the bite. After dental school, prospective orthodontists go on for an additional 2-3 academic years of specialized education in orthodontics at an accredited orthodontic residency program. Only those who have successfully completed this formal education may call themselves “orthodontists,” and only orthodontists are admitted as AAO members.

“Despite the recession and difficult economic times in recent years, orthodontic treatment is at an all-time high,” says Dr. Poole. “A healthy, beautiful smile is an investment for a lifetime – no matter what age the treatment begins!”

**In a 2013 study conducted for the AAO by Impulse Research Corporation among individuals who, as adults, had orthodontic treatment provided by orthodontists, respondents reported that orthodontic treatment contributed to improvements in their professional and personal lives. Seventy-five percent of adults surveyed reported improvements in career or personal relationships, and attributed this to the improved post-orthodontic treatment smile. Citing newfound self-confidence, 92 percent of survey respondents said they would recommend orthodontic treatment to other adults.*

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About the American Association of Orthodontists: Founded in 1900, the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) is the world’s oldest and largest dental specialty organization. It represents more than 18,000 orthodontist members throughout the United States, Canada and abroad. The Association encourages and sponsors key research to enable its members to provide the highest quality of care to patients, and is committed to educating the public about the need for, and benefits of, orthodontic treatment.

Orthodontists are uniquely qualified specialists who diagnose, prevent and treat dental and facial irregularities to correctly align teeth and jaws. After graduating from dental school and then completing the required two-to-three years of specialized education in an accredited orthodontic residency program, orthodontists are eligible for membership in the AAO.

For more information about orthodontics or to find AAO member orthodontists in your area, please visit mylifemysmile.org.

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