



For Immediate Release

Consumer Alert

Risks Involved with “Do It Yourself” Teeth Straightening Products

St. Louis (January 31, 2015) – Consumers who may be considering “do it yourself” orthodontic treatment should be aware that they may be putting their teeth, gums and bones of the jaws in harm’s way. This alert is predicated by the uptick and availability of such products available online and in retail stores.

Among the ‘quick fix’ offerings are rubber bands promoted to close a gap between teeth. These products can be a waste of consumers’ money. At the worst, they can cause extensive damage to teeth, bone and soft tissue that could require expensive and extensive restoration by a multi-disciplinary team of specialists.

Any time a dental procedure is undertaken by an untrained, unsupervised individual there is a substantial risk for irreparable damage. “The American Association of Orthodontists is committed to consumer health and safety and urges anyone considering any type of teeth straightening procedure to see an orthodontic specialist,” says Robert E. Varner, DMD, president of the American Association of Orthodontists. “The risks associated with ‘do it yourself’ orthodontics can, and should be, avoided.”

The use of rubber bands in dentistry is not new, and one of the earliest uses was to extract teeth in patients with bleeding disorders. The practitioner simply placed a rubber band around the tooth to be extracted, and in 4-6 weeks the elastic would slowly work its way down the sides of the tooth, destroying the bone and the soft tissue, and the tooth would fall out. However, today consumers are being told that by simply putting a special rubber band around teeth that gap, the space will close. Because of the known risks, orthodontists consider the unsupervised movement of teeth using just elastics to be below the standard of care, and it can result in permanent tooth loss. A [photo in the September 2014 issue of The American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics](#) shows damage caused by a submerged elastic.

Aligning jaws, straightening teeth and correcting bites should begin with a comprehensive examination by an orthodontist, not with a few clicks on a computer screen and not without

the supervision of a qualified dental professional. Throughout orthodontic treatment, and through regularly scheduled appointments, orthodontists assess the movement of teeth, bone and soft tissue, and make the necessary adjustments to advance the process.

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 American Association of Orthodontists.

[The American Association of Orthodontists](#), (AAO) is the world's largest and oldest specialty dental organization, representing more than 17,000 orthodontists in the U.S., 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.

No two patients are alike and there simply is not a risk-free, at-home, one-size-fits-all option. For a healthy, beautiful smile, the AAO urges healthcare consumers to visit an orthodontist.

For information on orthodontic care and to locate nearby members of the American Association of Orthodontists, visit mylifemysmile.org.

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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 17,000 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.

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

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