

## Orthodontists Report Uptick in Number of Patients Attempting DIY Teeth Straightening

**(St. Louis, February 23, 2017)** — In a recent survey conducted among its members, the [American Association of Orthodontists](#) reports that nearly 13 percent of its member orthodontists are seeing patients who have tried do-it-yourself (DIY) teeth straightening; some of those attempts have caused irreparable damage.

The methods and materials commonly used to attempt DIY teeth straightening include rubber bands, dental floss, fishing line, paper clips, biting on pencils, creating fake retainers and pushing teeth with fingers. “What most people don’t understand is that moving teeth is a biological process that involves bone that dissolves and re-builds as teeth are moved into their new positions,” says DeWayne B. McCamish, DDS, MS, president of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO). “Moving teeth is best done under the direct supervision of an orthodontist after an in-person assessment, including complete diagnostic records.

“It’s really a shame when someone comes in after attempting DIY orthodontic treatment and we determine that the damage they’ve done to their teeth is so extensive that teeth cannot be saved,” says Dr. McCamish. “By the time a lay person recognizes something is wrong with their teeth, it may not be reversible, even with professional help. The cost of dealing with replacing a lost tooth can easily exceed \$20,000 over a lifetime and certainly be much less than ideal. You have to remember that the goal of good orthodontic treatment is obtaining a healthy, beautiful smile for a life time – shortcuts can be disastrous.”

One orthodontist who responded to the survey noted, “The patient tried to close a gap between her lower incisors by wrapping string around the two teeth. I was horrified to see the string deep in the gum and the severe mobility in the two teeth.”

The reported age range of people attempting to straighten their own teeth was from 8 years old to over age 60. Thirty-nine percent of orthodontists who reported seeing DIY patients had to provide corrective and restorative treatment, and the majority of those doctors say the patients would have ultimately saved time and money if they had gone to an orthodontist in the first place for professional treatment.

Dr. McCamish attributes the DIY trend primarily to social media. “There are literally hundreds of videos on YouTube alone, with ‘tutorials’ on how to straighten your own teeth.”

Approximately 70 percent of DIY patients seen by AAO members who took part in the study were in a social media-friendly age group, between the ages 10 and 34. Social media usage in these age groups exceeds 80 percent. (Source: <http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/social-media/social-media-use-by-age-group/>)

“If it’s a matter of economics, many orthodontists do an initial consultation at no cost and with no obligation. It’s an opportunity to get the expert’s opinion about your problem, options to resolve it, and in so doing, avoid the unintended harmful consequences that could result from DIY treatment. Most orthodontists work with patients to fit treatment into their budgets. It’s common for AAO members to work out interest-free payment plans,” he continues. “We feel everyone deserves a healthy, beautiful smile.” Indigent children may qualify for free treatment through the [AAO’s Donated Orthodontic Services](#) program.

Advances in technology and techniques offer patients more options than ever. Today’s next-to-invisible treatment choices include clear aligners, ceramic (tooth colored) braces, and lingual (behind the teeth) braces. Small, sleek, more traditional braces can be an option, too.

“Having confidence in your smile is priceless,” Dr. McCamish says. “The best way to achieve that smile is by working with the most qualified healthcare professional: the orthodontist. The public is invited to use the Find an Orthodontist service on [mylifemysmile.org](http://mylifemysmile.org) to locate nearby AAO member-orthodontists.”

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### **About the American Association of Orthodontists**

Members of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) help children, teenagers and adults achieve healthy, beautiful smiles.

Orthodontists are uniquely qualified specialists who diagnose, prevent and treat dental and facial irregularities to correctly align teeth and jaws. Those who wish to become orthodontists must first graduate from dental school. Their education continues for an additional two-to-three academic years as they study orthodontics at an accredited orthodontic residency program. Only those with this formal education may ethically call themselves “orthodontists.” As specialists, orthodontists limit their scope of practice to orthodontics.

The AAO is the world’s oldest and largest dental specialty organization. Founded in 1900, it represents more than 18,000 orthodontist members throughout the United States, Canada and abroad. The AAO 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.

Only orthodontists qualify for AAO membership. For more information, and to find AAO-member orthodontists near you, visit [mylifemysmile.org](http://mylifemysmile.org).

**Media Contacts:**

<p><b>Pam Paladin</b> American Assn. of Orthodontists (314) 993-1700, ext. 524 <a href="mailto:ppaladin@aaortho.org">ppaladin@aaortho.org</a></p>	<p><b>Priscilla Visintine</b> Visintine &amp; Ryan (314) 422-5646 <a href="mailto:priscilla@visintineandryan.com">priscilla@visintineandryan.com</a></p>	<p><b>Janet Ryan</b> Visintine &amp; Ryan (314) 822-8860 <a href="mailto:janet@visintineandryan.com">janet@visintineandryan.com</a></p>
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