

Colorful Braces Make More Than A Fashion Statement

(NAPSA)—For orthodontic patients who choose to make fashion statements with their mouths, colors are really heating up. From soft pastels that coordinate with a wardrobe to bright hues for celebrating holidays or expressing school spirit, colors appear mainly on the elastic ties that bind the wires to the brackets. These ties can be changed when the wires are changed.

While colors for braces are fun, the fun serves a serious purpose, notes Dr. William Mahon, a spokesperson for the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO). Enthusiastic patients are more cooperative. And better cooperation can yield results that meet everyone's expectations.

"When patients decide to become involved in their treatment, they usually take better care of their braces. The bottom line is, when patients follow our instructions, they can end up with better results," emphasizes Dr. Mahon.

Patients have a splashy array of hues from which to choose for much of their orthodontic hardware. Even the replaceable rubber bands that many patients put in and take out daily come in about as many colors as you'd see at a fabric store.

"Patients won't take the time to choose special colors unless they intend to use them," Dr. Mahon says. "You wouldn't believe how enthusiastic my patients are about colors."

"Without my St. Patrick's green, I'd get pinched!" exclaims Jonathan Cobb, 12, during a check-up at Dr. Mahon's office in Bentonville, Ark.

Many adults choose different



Photo courtesy of WildWires

New alternatives for orthodontic patients include star-shaped brackets.

colors whenever they need to have their braces adjusted. For a sports fanatic, it's a unique way to express loyalty to college or pro teams.

Retainers Can Be Fun, Too

Once the braces are off, retainers are another colorful means of personal expression. Some glow in the dark, and some are personalized with a photo of Fido or Cindy Crawford, or even the logo of a favorite sports team. Young male patients, of whom many are into anything gross, may choose spiders, snakes or other creepy crawlers for their retainers.

The AAO notes that more people than ever are bracing themselves. Colorful retainers and other orthodontic trappings, of course, are only part of the reason for this trend.

Patients are finding that today's high-tech materials are more comfortable. The sophisticated engineering of the tooth-moving wires—developed through NASA and activated by body heat—has increased their tensile strength and flexibility, which makes orthodontic treatment more comfortable. (Some patients want braces that are nearly invisible—so they choose clear brackets

through which their teeth can be seen, or lingual braces, which are applied to the backs of the teeth to move them from behind the scenes.)

Free Information Available

To find an orthodontist in your area, ask your family dentist for a referral. Also, the American Association of Orthodontists can help you find a member orthodontist near you. Just call 1-800-STRAIGHT (1-800-787-2444). Or visit the AAO Web site at www.braces.org.

A free video, "A Smile That's Good for Life," and other valuable information on orthodontic topics are available from the AAO. In addition, anyone can take advantage of "Smile Bank," the AAO's free computer-imaging program. Send in a close-up photo of your face or your child's face, front view, featuring a natural, toothy smile and an orthodontist will prepare a computer-generated "after braces" picture. Mail the photo (and return address) to: AAO, c/o "SMILES," Dept. 0-20, 401 N. Lindbergh Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63141-7816. You'll receive a free photo showing how your smile might benefit from orthodontics.

The AAO is comprised of more than 13,500 members in the United States, Canada and abroad. Orthodontists are uniquely qualified to correct "bad bites." They are specialists in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of dental and facial irregularities. The American Dental Association requires orthodontists to have at least two academic years of advanced specialty training in orthodontics in an accredited program, after graduation from dental school.