

## Brace Yourself

A few years ago, at age 41, Mary Singh got braces. A year later her 13-year-old daughter, Anna, got them too. And shortly after that, her 11-year-old son, Jamie, began wearing a device on the roof of his mouth to expand his palate in preparation for braces. “It was really quite comical,” laughs Mary. “At one point, all three of us would troop into the orthodontist’s office together and plop into three treatment chairs all in a row, just like the three bears.” Like Goldilocks, the Singhs found the experience just right. “I’m so glad I went for it,” says Mary, whose teeth had started to shift as an adult.

Fortunately for her, and you, advances in braces have made the process less painful, less lengthy, and, well, less ugly. “Braces today are not the ones you may remember,” says Donald Joondeph, an orthodontist in Seattle and president-elect of the American Association of Orthodontists. Here’s a look at today’s braces.

**METAL BRACKETS** The closest descendant of the braces you may have known as a kid, metal brackets—which now come in gold as well as silver—are still the most widely used because they’re the strongest. They’re also the most durable and efficient at moving teeth, which means less time in the orthodontist’s chair.

**CERAMIC BRACKETS** Designed to mimic the color of your teeth, these brackets are ideal for adults hoping to minimize the visual impact of braces. Ceramics are more fragile than metal and also more expensive. Joondeph suggests using them only on your most visible teeth—the upper front six—and applying metal to the rest.

**CLEAR BRACES** Manufactured by Ormco, Sapphire Inspire! brackets are the only clear brackets on the market. They’re made of sapphire and are translucent (sorry, you can’t make them into jewelry after you’re



It’s not only kids who are wearing braces these days. Adults are having them put on in droves.

done with them). If your teeth are very white, the brackets will seem to disappear; if your teeth are less than white, the brackets may be more noticeable.

**LINGUAL BRACES** Think metal brackets turned inside out. These braces are placed behind the teeth, so they’re virtually invisible to others. Linguals are tougher to position than regular braces, so treatment may take longer. Also, they can make it harder to speak.

**CLEAR REMOVABLE ALIGNERS** These clear, plastic “trays” are similar to standard retainers in that they can be slipped in and out of your mouth. Aligners are designed to incrementally shift the position of your teeth and are really only an option for adults who have teeth that have shifted only slightly.

For more information on how to face braces as an adult, go to [braces.org](http://braces.org). MEGANOTHERSENGORMAN