



# Invisible Braces

BREAKTHROUGH TECHNOLOGY MAKES IT EASIER  
TO STRAIGHTEN TEETH AT ANY AGE

BY JOHN BYRD



*Dr. Sharif, who has been practicing for 23 years, is a diplomate of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry and an assistant professor at Howard University.*

If you are looking for beautiful straight teeth through an orthodontic treatment that doesn't require metal braces, then a consultation with Greater Washington Dentistry (GWD) can determine if clear aligners are a sensible choice for you. Increasingly, this is an option being pursued not only by teenagers, but by adult professionals who have learned how effective aligners can be in improving their appearance.

"For older people who grew up in a time when it was thought that you couldn't cosmetically change the position of your teeth once you'd reached adulthood, this technique is a revelation," says Dr Shohreh Sharif, who heads GWD's innovative dental practice from her offices on Lee Highway.

"Because methods have improved so much in the past two decades, we are now routinely treating adults in their 50s and 60s. In fact, there's a convenience factor that

that didn't exist before: One can comfortably wear invisible removable braces at work—and smile confidently, even as the treatment process is underway."

GWD doctors, who have mastered a wide range of state-of-art orthodontic techniques, recognize clear aligners as a highly effective teeth-straightening method. Treatment employs a series of virtually invisible, removable and comfortable aligners that inspire the patient to smile more *during* treatment as well as after. This is due partly to the fact that patients are less self-conscious simply because the braces are less apparent.

Used in many clinical situations, clear aligners can be applied to a full spectrum of dental problems and can handily satisfy most post-treatment retention requirements.

Although the time required varies by patient, on average 12 months of treatment is typical—the equiva-



lent to 24 sets of clear aligners. In cases where there is minor crowding, the process may be completed even faster and with fewer sets of aligners.

At GDW, the “Invisalign” system is often preferred, and is only prescribed by our Invisalign-trained orthodontists or general practitioner dentists. All GWD dentists who apply this method have participated in clinical education programs specifically designed for orthodontists or GP dentists who want to include this in their practice.

## WHAT IS IT?

### WHY WOULD I WANT IT?

Clear aligners are virtually invisible and removable, which means patients are comfortable eating and drinking while treatment is ongoing. Brushing and flossing are, likewise, much easier. Better yet, the aligners are more comfortable than traditional braces and have no metal or wires, which usually means a patient spends less time on in-office adjustments.

The clear aligner option also allows patients to view their own virtual treatment plan and witness how their teeth will appear once treatment is completed—a boost to self-esteem—regardless of the patient’s age.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

A patient wears each set of aligners for about two weeks, removing them only to eat, drink, brush and floss. As each aligner is replaced with the next in the series, the

patient’s teeth move—little by little, week by week—until they have straightened into their final positions.

A patient visits GWD about once every six weeks to ensure all is progressing as planned. This program averages 9 to 15 months with an average of 18 and 30 aligners worn during treatment (but vary from case to case).

Dr. Sharif, head of the GWD practice, begins each case by thoroughly examining the patient to determine if clear invisible braces are the appropriate choice. Once the patient’s needs have been diagnosed, the process of forming the aligners gets underway. When the aligners are ready, the patient is shown how to wear them—and how to care for them.

Some advantages of a clear aligner treatment are:

- Requires fewer in-office adjustments than with metal braces; less time taken away of from work, school or other activities.
- Brushing and cleaning teeth is natural, unimpeded by metal appliances.
- Eating is much more comfortable than metal braces permit.
- Clear aligners are less painful and much easier to accommodate than metal braces. Orthodontic treatment gets underway without a protracted period of physical or psychological adjustment.
- Overall, clear aligners boost a patient’s confidence which enables them to shape the smile (and the outlook) they’ve always wanted.

In all, a beautiful gift to yourself or from a loving parent to their children.

*“Orthodontic techniques have improved so much that we routinely treat adults in their 50s and 60s... There’s a convenience factor: One can comfortably wear invisible removable braces, smiling confidently even as the treatment process is underway.”*

—Dr. Shohreh Sharif

*Opposite: Adult professionals are now using clear aligners to straighten teeth. “There’s a convenience factor that didn’t exist before,” says Dr. Sharif. “One can comfortably wear invisible removable braces in an office and smile confidently even as the treatment process is underway.”*

*Above: Greater Washington Dentistry’s new Merrifield facility on Lee Highway is offering pediatric, orthodontic and general dentistry services. The professional practice is now seeing adults as well as children.*