

Above: (left) Dawn' before Invisalign; (right) after treatment with Invisalign

SMILE:

Invisalign makes patients want to show their pearly whites

Words [C. Ruth Ebrahim]

Having put two children through braces and witnessed the orthodontist appointments, the 42-year-old mother was ready to do something for her own crooked, crowded teeth.

She had been told there wasn't anything to do for her smile. Her teeth were too crowded. There wasn't enough room in her mouth to move the teeth around. Invisalign would never work for her. Not being one to take no for an answer, Dawn Fisher of Newcastle, decided to find out for herself if there was any way to straighten her teeth.

She went to see Michele Mills, DMD at Mills and Shannon Dentistry in Salem. The dentist office off Keagy Road specializes in high quality, individualized care in a peaceful, relaxing environment. Dr. Mills and her husband Travis Shannon, DDS, opened their private practice in 2008 and offer Invisalign—the invisible braces—along with other traditional and advanced dental treatments.

"I didn't like smiling because my teeth were so crooked," Dawn Fisher says. "I wasn't too hopeful when I went to see Dr. Mills."

She describes herself as "ecstatic" when Dr. Mills told her that Invisalign would work to adjust her overcrowded and out of place teeth. Fisher, who regularly saw a dentist for cleanings, says her teeth were healthy, but she started noticing it was

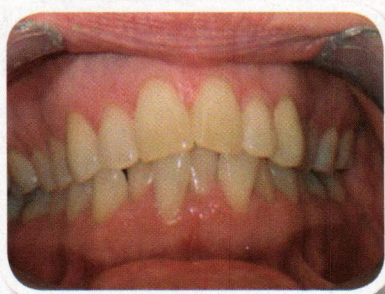


difficult to clean them properly and she wasn't able to use whitening treatments because her teeth were too close together.



Dr. Mills says one of the greatest benefits of Invisalign is that it gives patients the ability to care for their teeth and provides for overall oral health. Most of her patients are adults, and many have overcrowding issues like Fisher, although she also uses Invisalign to treat teeth with too much space. Adults choose Invisalign, because it suits their lifestyle better.

"The reason I went the Invisalign route was because every time I took my kids to the orthodontist, it was tightening of metal and they would be sore for two or three days," she recalls. "There was no hurt, no pain, at all in Invisalign."

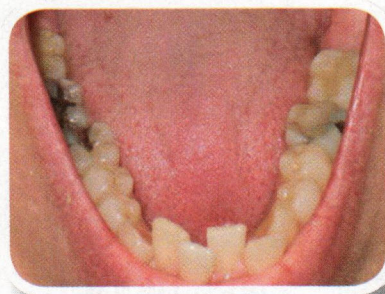


Fisher wore the invisible braces for 15 months, going through the process of gradually moving through a series of plastic trays, or aligners, that slowly move the teeth.

"After the first couple of months, you don't even realize they are there," Fisher says.

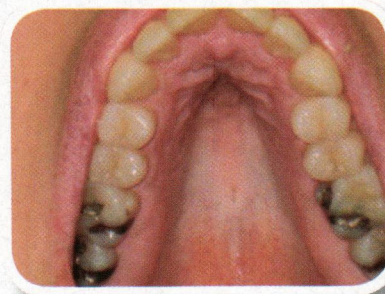


Any patient seeking Invisalign treatment is first given a no charge consultation to make sure the invisible braces will work for them. Prospective patients must be free of cavities and have a regular dentist they see for cleanings. Invisalign provides treatment for teens and adults, and Dr. Mills says the product has continually improved every year since she began offering it.



Once a patient decides to get the invisible braces, photos and models are taken of the patient's teeth and submitted to Invisalign for analysis. Dr. Mills then takes computerized data provided by Invisalign to create the individualized, clear and invisible plastic trays that each patient wears. Patients see her every six weeks for a check-up and get a new tray every two weeks, Dr. Mills says.

"A patient's goal should be to wear the trays 22 hours a day," the dentist explains. "The cases that are slowing down or going off track, those patients usually aren't wearing their trays consistently."



Dr. Mills says patient compliance is the most difficult care element to manage. Each tray moves the teeth only a quarter of a millimeter, so keeping on track with tray upgrades is essential to completing treatment in the usual 15-month time period.

Young people have a more difficult time maintaining treatment requirements, Dr. Mills says, but Invisalign includes compliance indicators on the teen trays that tell parents and dentists if the patient is wearing the trays appropriately. That makes keeping on track easier for teen Invisalign patients.



Wearing Invisalign came with a few lifestyle changes, Fisher says, all of which are good and which she continues to practice three months after completing treatment.



"You've gotten in the routine or habit that after you eat, you want to brush and floss your teeth, but that's a good habit," she says.

Invisalign patients are asked to brush and floss after removing the trays, Dr. Mills says, but patients like Fisher go the extra step and brush and floss after each meal. They cannot chew gum, but most patients are instructed to use "chewies" that help push the aligners down onto the teeth properly.



Fisher says she was happy to oblige any instructions so she could get the most out of the Invisalign treatment, and she couldn't be happier with the results.

"Nobody even knew I had them," she says. "Now, I get comments all the time about how straight and white my teeth are. Even my husband, who didn't think Invisalign would work for me, is a believer."

She also credits the personalized care she received from Dr. Mills and the Mills and Shannon Dentistry office for encouraging her and being actively involved in the whole process.



"I've never been so happy to go to the dentist before," she laughs. "Every time I went, I could see progress and see a shift in my teeth."



Dr. Michele Mills and Dr. Travis Shannon are general dentists who graduated from the Medical University of South Carolina in 2001 and completed an Advanced Education in General Dentistry residency program. Following graduation, they were dentists in the NAVY for four and a half years. They have been married since 1998 and have two sons. Dr. Mills and Dr. Shannon are members of the American Dental Association, Academy of General Dentistry, the Virginia Dental Association, Big Lick Study Club and the Roanoke Valley Dental Society. They are both active in these organizations. Dr. Mills was the program coordinator for the Roanoke Valley Dental Society in 2007-2008.

