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What It's Really Like To Have Braces At 30

By Grazia staff - 15 July 2015
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Kate Wills on getting braces at 30

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by Kate Wills

I spent the best part of my teenage years in metal train-tracks, feeling like that kid in The Wonder Years (if that's before your time then think Katy Perry in the 'Last Friday Night' video). So the thought of getting braces again filled me with abject terror. But whether it was gazing endlessly at pictures of Sienna Miller's perfectly-aligned smile or realising that (like 81% of Brits*) I rarely opened my mouth in photos because I hated my teeth - I decided that turning 30 would be the time to finally sort my crooked gnashers out. Yes, I forgot to wear my retainers as a kid - so my jaggedy Austin Powers snagglers crept back in. But it turns out I'm not alone in wanting a Hollywood smile. Britain's 100 largest dentist companies recorded a collective turnover of nearly £1bn last year, with more and more people wanting laser whitening, computerised smile analysis and yes, straightening.

My dentist Rhona Eskander (quite possibly the most glamorous woman to ever walk the earth, let alone stick their latex-gloved fingers in my mouth) recommended Invisalign - or "Invis" as those in the know call it - plastic retainers that you wear 22 hours a day for around a year. These clever moulds are made specially for you and fit over your teeth. You switch to a new mould every two weeks, gradually forcing your pearly whites into submission. It's slower than the traditional wire brace, but not having a mouthful of metal is a definite plus for me.

The first 24 hours are hell. It feels like I'm wearing the plastic gumshields we were forced to put on for hockey in PE lessons. And I sound like I'm drunk (which obviously isn't ideal at work). "Text me if you're having a meltdown," Rhona tells me as she hands me a pink bit of plastic I'm supposed to bite down on. I feel like a dog with a chew toy. But thoughts of my dream smile (and a couple of paracetamol) are enough to grin and bear it. I'm now six months into the treatment. So here are 6 things I've learned...

Kate getting fitted

It's no longer snack o'clock

You have to take the retainers out to eat, then brush your teeth before you put them back in, which means there's no snacking between meals. This has been great for avoiding the office crisp run, but has also meant that I now make my meals extra-calorific so they're worth taking my retainers out for. Yes, I will have fries with that (said with a lisp).

You'll get weird looks in the work loos

Brushing plastic moulds of my own mouth in the communal sinks doesn't phase me anymore. I am also now the kind of person who carries a toothbrush, toothpaste and dental floss in their bag. It's just like that scene in Pretty Woman without the prostitution and no one thinks they're drugs. No wonder Julia Roberts has such great teeth - she carries dental floss!

There is no sexy way to remove braces

My boyfriend massively took the piss at first - calling me "brace face" (how original) and referring to them as 'my dentures'. And while kissing feels a bit weird with them in, it's a massive bonus being able to take them out when you, ahem, need to. And yes, sometimes a bit of drool comes out when you pull them off your teeth. It's hot.

You'll look a bit like a vampire

Two months ago, Rhona took things up a gear by filing between my teeth with metal (a bit like turbo-charged dental floss) so that there'd be room for teeth to move. She also glued tiny ceramic brackets to my teeth to give the moulds "something to grab onto". The brackets make me feel like I have fangs and my face is sore for a few days, but spiky teeth are cool.

People will have 'mixed' reactions

A few of my friends expressed dismay that my face would be changing, insisting that "crooked teeth add character", but most people say they want to get their teeth 'done' too and ask how much it costs. The answer to that question is 'A LOT' (prices start at £1,500) but you'll have straight teeth for life. Way more of an investment than a Victoria Beckham handbag.

It's all worth it

When you notice that your teeth have started to move (I couldn't even see some of my bottom teeth before they were so crooked) is a brilliant moment. And I am now so laissez faire about putting my hands in my mouth and fiddling with bits of plastic. Although the time I was at a works drink party and whipped the retainers out into my hand so I could shove in some canapes was probably a bit TOO relaxed.

For more information go to invisalign.co.uk and chelseadentalclinic.co.uk

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