

ONE IN TWO TEENS BELIEVE WEARING METAL BRACES MAKES THEM SELF CONSCIOUS ABOUT SMILING; LOWERS SELF-ESTEEM, ACCORDING TO NEW NATIONAL SURVEY

New, Clear Alternative for Straightening Teeth, Now Gives Teens a Choice

03.10.2009 – SANTA CLARA, Calif. (Jan. 13, 2009) – At an age when image is so important, the thought of having metal brackets and wires constantly attached to teeth may exacerbate the already delicate self esteem of today's teens, according to a new nationwide survey of 12-to-17 year-olds from Align Technology, Inc. (Nasdaq: ALGN), (www.aligntech.com), makers of Invisalign Teen™ (www.invisalignteen.com).



While having straight teeth and a beautiful smile is important to teens, the “Behind the Smile” survey conducted for Align by global insights firm Kelton Research, reveals that over half of teens (54%) believe metal braces would make them more self conscious and one in two teens (50%) would smile less.

“Not everyone is born with a perfect smile. So for many teens, wearing braces is inevitable,” said Calif.-based Orthodontist, Mark A. Lowe, D.D.S. (www.drloweortho.com). “The good news is that today's image-conscious teens now have a choice for straightening their teeth. There are proven alternatives such as clear, removable braces, like Invisalign Teen, that are comparable in cost to metal braces, but meet teens' desire for aesthetic treatment and are a better fit for their busy lifestyles filled with sports, music and other activities.”

According to the American Association of Orthodontists, patients, age 12 to 17 years represent more than half of the over two million orthodontic case starts in the U.S. each year. Until now, only a small number of orthodontists have routinely treated teenagers with clear aligners due in large part to concerns about patient compliance and the ongoing development of permanent dentition.

Invisalign Teen was developed with leading orthodontists who understand the unique treatment and compliance needs of teens. The new Invisalign Teen product combines the benefits of Invisalign with new features like blue Compliance Indicators that are designed to gradually fade as the aligner is worn, Eruption Tabs that accommodate the growth of secondary molars, and other features that address clinical needs common to teen patients.

“When you walk into a room with braces you feel like everyone is looking at you or when you're talking to someone you feel like they're looking at your braces,” admits 14-year-old high-school freshman Elizabeth C. “With Invisalign, it's cool because your teeth are getting straighter, but people don't even realize you have them. I don't worry about wearing my aligners during cheerleading, winter guard or swim practice either. They are safe to wear and they don't interfere with my life.”

A closer look at the data reveals other key insights:

- **In Search of a Smile.** Only four percent of respondents would flash their pearly whites more often if wearing metal braces. The survey shows that a higher number of older teens would stop themselves from cracking a smile. Over half (55%) of those ages 15-17 would smile less, compared to 44 percent of 12-14 year-olds.
- **Gender Clash.** Teen boys are more mindful of all the negative things that go along with wearing metal braces, while girls are a little more willing to see the brighter side. Over half (53%) of males ages 12-17 would smile less if they had metal braces, compared to less than one in two (46%) of their female counterparts. In addition, teen girls are more likely than boys to note some positive things about having metal braces, such as being able to customize them (43% vs. 24%) and the fact that braces can make you more conscientious about dental hygiene at a young age (37% vs. 30%).
- **Brace Yourselves.** Though a majority (62%), feel that wearing metal braces as a teen is painful and uncomfortable, the effects go deeper than this. More than one in two (54%) teens believe wearing metal braces makes them self-conscious about smiling.
- **Why They're Not Turning Their Frowns Upside-Down.** Braces seem to exacerbate many common teenage issues. Over a third (35%) believe teens with metal braces get made fun of, and nearly a quarter (24%) think metal braces lower a teen's self-esteem.
- **Not In This Together.** Wearing metal braces apparently isn't the best bonding experience, as just four percent of 12-17 year-olds believe they allow teens to fit in with their peers. And, contrary to popular belief, just 11 percent feel that having metal braces is a teen rite of passage.
- **West Coast: Image is everything.** While some might argue about where trends are born, West Coast teens agree on one thing – braces are not for the image-conscious. Nearly two-thirds (60%), say braces make teens more self-conscious about smiling, compared to 53% of teens living elsewhere. West Coast teens are also more likely than the rest of their peers to believe braces lower self-esteem (29% vs. 22%).

The Invisalign Teen survey sampled 510 U.S. respondents aged 12-17 with a 95% confidence level of +/- 4.3 percentage points.

Clear, removable braces now available for teens as an alternative to help boost self While having straight teeth and a beautiful smile is important to teens, the “Behind the Smile” survey conducted for Align by global insights firm Kelton Research, reveals that over half of teens (54%) believe metal braces would make them more self-conscious and one in two teens (50%) would smile less.

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