

Orthodontic Myths Vs. Facts: Debunking Common Misconceptions

**Richa Wadhawan¹, Sweta Kaushik², Danish Uz Zama Khan³,
Harshika Sengar⁴, Mustafizur Rahman⁵, Sakshi Sharma⁶, Bhumika
Varshney⁷**

¹*Professor, Department Of Oral Medicine, Diagnosis & Radiology, Pdm Dental College & Research Institute, Bahadurgarh, Haryana, India*

²*Post Graduate, Department Of Orthodontics And Dentofacial Orthopaedics, Rishiraj College Of Dental Sciences And Research Centre, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India*

³*Professor, Department Of Dentistry, Era's Lucknow Medical College & Hospital, Uttar Pradesh, India*

⁴*Dental Surgeon, Institute Of Dental Education & Advance Studies, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India*

⁵*Dental Surgeon, Glowing Grins Dental Clinic, Lakhimpur, Assam, India*

⁶*Dental Surgeon, Institute Of Dental Education & Advance Studies, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India*

⁷*Dental Surgeon, Smilez Dental, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India
Email: wadhawanricha1@gmail.com*

Orthodontics is often surrounded by numerous myths and misconceptions, leading to confusion and hesitation for those considering treatment. These misunderstandings can prevent individuals from seeking care that can significantly improve both their appearance and oral health. It tackles common misconceptions, such as the belief that orthodontic treatment is only for children, the myth that braces are unbearably painful, and the idea that straightening teeth is merely a cosmetic endeavor. Additionally, it dispels myths about the length and cost of treatment, as well as the effectiveness of clear aligners versus traditional braces. By clearing up these misconceptions, the article highlights the critical role orthodontics plays not only in enhancing one's smile but in improving long-term oral health. Ultimately, this piece encourages individuals to pursue treatment with confidence, free from the fear and uncertainty caused by false information. This review aims to confront and debunk some of the most prevalent myths about orthodontic care, providing patients with the clear, factual information they need to make empowered decisions.

Keywords: Bite issues, Braces myths, Ceramic braces, Clear aligners, Misaligned teeth, Orthodontic treatment, Pain and discomfort, Traditional braces.

1. Introduction

Orthodontic treatment is a vital part of dental care that goes beyond achieving a flawless smile. It plays a significant role in addressing misaligned teeth, bite issues, and other dental problems that can impact overall oral health. However, despite its many advantages, orthodontics is often surrounded by misconceptions that can discourage individuals from pursuing the treatment they need [1]. From the misconception that braces are only for teenagers to the belief that they are excessively painful or expensive, these myths often hinder people from fully exploring the array of treatment options available [2]. Gaining a clear understanding of the facts behind orthodontic care can help ease concerns, clear up misunderstandings, and provide individuals with the knowledge they need to take the next step toward a healthier, more confident smile [3]. One of the most enduring myths about orthodontics is that braces are reserved solely for teenagers or younger individuals. While many undergo orthodontic treatment in their adolescent years, the idea that orthodontics is exclusive to children is far from true. In reality, more adults are seeking orthodontic treatment than ever before, thanks to advancements in technology that offer a range of discreet and effective solutions [4]. Adult patients can benefit from braces or alternatives such as clear aligners just as much as younger patients, making orthodontic care both accessible and valuable for individuals of all ages. Many adults who missed out on orthodontic treatment in their youth are now opting to correct alignment issues, enhance their appearance, and improve their oral health [Figure 1].



Figure 1: Correction of spacing in a 55-year-old male patient following orthodontic treatment

So, whether one is a teen or an adult, orthodontic treatment can be tailored to meet personal needs, regardless of age [5]. Orthodontic care offers a wealth of benefits for people of all ages, from correcting misaligned teeth and improving bite function to enhancing overall oral health. Despite these advantages, a cloud of myths continues to surround orthodontics, often discouraging individuals from pursuing the treatment they need [6]. Debunking these misconceptions empowers individuals to make informed decisions for a healthier, more confident smile. One of the most persistent myths is that braces are painfully uncomfortable. While mild discomfort may occur when braces are first applied or after adjustments, it is temporary and manageable. Modern orthodontics has come a long way, with innovations in materials—such as clear aligners and more comfortable braces—that make treatment far more comfortable than ever before [7]. Another widespread myth is that braces are the only option for straightening teeth. In reality, there are a variety of alternatives, such as Invisalign and ceramic braces, which offer discreet and effective solutions. For some patients, combining orthodontic treatments with cosmetic procedures like bonding or veneers can lead to optimal results. An experienced orthodontist will tailor a plan based on each patient's unique needs, providing a personalized approach to care. There's also the belief that orthodontic treatment takes years to complete [8]. While the length of orthodontic treatment can vary depending on the complexity of the issue, technological innovations like 3D imaging and digital tools have significantly increased treatment efficiency. Clear aligners, for instance, can deliver faster results for mild to moderate misalignments, reducing the time commitment. Yet, many still view orthodontics as a cosmetic procedure—but it's much more than that. Misaligned teeth and jaw issues can lead to serious health problems, such as difficulty chewing, speaking, and breathing, along with an increased risk of tooth decay and jaw disorders. Orthodontic treatment tackles these underlying issues, enhancing both function and appearance while preventing future dental complications [9]. Cost is often a concern for those considering orthodontics, but with proper planning and insurance, it's more accessible than many believe. Most dental insurance plans cover part of the cost, and many orthodontists offer flexible payment options. The long-term benefits—improved oral health, greater self-confidence, and a beautiful smile—often far outweigh the initial investment [10]. Lastly, after braces are removed, retainers are essential to maintain results. Without them, teeth may drift over time. Following the orthodontist's instructions for wearing retainers is vital to preserving a straight smile. By addressing these myths and providing clear facts, it's possible to make informed decisions about orthodontic care. Whether considering braces or alternative treatments, understanding the full range of options, benefits, and costs allows one to take control of dental health and embrace orthodontics as a path not only to a better smile but to a healthier future [11]. By dispelling these common myths and shedding light on the facts, this review aims to provide a clearer understanding of orthodontic care [Figure 2]. Whether considering braces or alternative treatments, recognizing the full spectrum of options, benefits, and costs will help individuals make informed decisions for their oral health. It's time to break free from misconceptions and embrace orthodontics as a path to not just a better smile, but a healthier future [12].

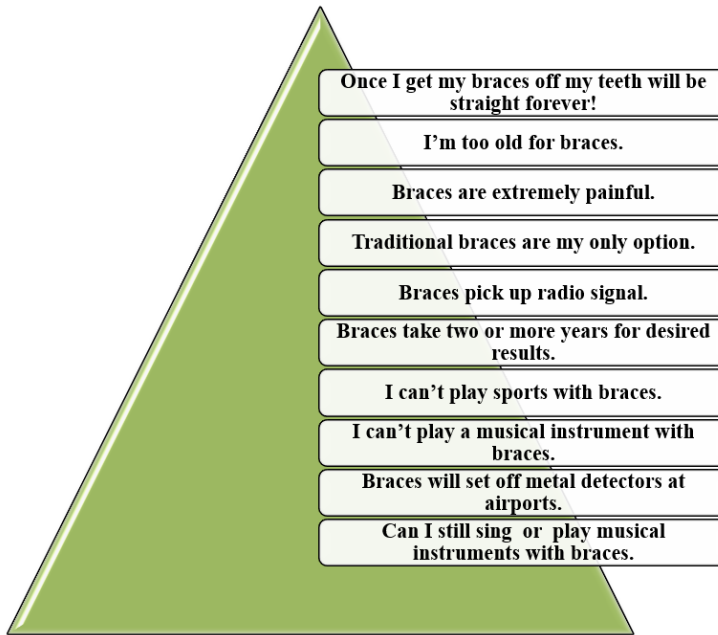


Figure 2: Myths about orthodontic treatment

2. Research Design:

In order to investigate and correct frequent misunderstandings regarding orthodontic treatment, this study uses a descriptive and qualitative research strategy. Accurately dispelling these beliefs requires first comprehending where they came from and how widespread they are. An appropriate research strategy would be a descriptive design with a qualitative approach to collect expert opinions and anecdotal evidence on the development and dissemination of myths among various demographics. These methodologies, when combined, provide for an in-depth examination of the subject.

3. Research Approach:

In order to accomplish the study goals, a mixed-methods strategy was employed. In order to find and examine common misunderstandings regarding orthodontic treatment, qualitative approaches including theme analysis and interviews were used. Patients' and orthodontists' professional and personal experiences were enriched by these strategies.

To determine how common these misconceptions were across demographics like age, location, and socioeconomic status, researchers turned to quantitative tools like surveys. This synergy allowed for comprehensive data collection that was both detailed and statistically significant, illuminating the problem from every angle.

4. Data Collection Methods

Primary and secondary sources were also used to compile the data for the study. Interviews and surveys were the main methods of gathering primary data. Patients, orthodontists, and members of the public were all given structured surveys to help uncover fallacies that people often hold. In order to collect quantitative and qualitative data, the survey had both open-ended and closed-ended questions. To further understand where these misconceptions came from and how they affected people, we conducted semi-structured interviews with dentists and orthodontists. A thorough literature review was conducted as part of the secondary data gathering process. This study included books, research publications, and internet sources including blogs, social media, and forums where orthodontic misconceptions are often addressed. In order to better comprehend the misunderstandings, this secondary study offered a more comprehensive context and backdrop.

Sampling Techniques

Orthodontists and other dental professionals with the necessary competence were recruited using purposive sampling, while patients and the general public were included through random selection. People having a minimum of sixteen years of age, current or previous orthodontic patients, and orthodontists with a minimum of five years of experience were all considered for participation. We also included members of the general public who had never had orthodontic treatment before so we could see how well they understood the need of orthodontic care. People who were either too young or too reluctant to take part were not included. The adoption of this sample method guaranteed a representative cross-section of the population with varying backgrounds and points of view.

Tools and Instruments

Data collection and analysis were made easier with the use of several technologies and devices. An extensive investigation on orthodontic treatment myths, their origins, and the factors that influence them was conducted using meticulously crafted interview guides and questionnaires. Online survey takers were sent out using Google questionnaires, while offline respondents received paper questionnaires. For qualitative data coding and theme analysis, we used NVivo, and for statistical analysis of survey data, we used SPSS. With the help of these instruments, we were able to spot patterns in the data and draw useful conclusions.

Data Analysis

A combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques was used to examine the gathered data. In order to discover the sources of prevalent misconceptions, thematic analysis was performed on interview transcripts and information from internet forums.

Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize survey results using measures like percentages and means, while inferential statistics were employed to find significant correlations between demographic characteristics and the frequency of misconceptions using tools like chi-square tests. The research challenge might be better understood with the help of this dual strategy.

Inclusion Criteria

- Individuals aged 16 and above.

- Patients currently undergoing or who have previously undergone orthodontic treatment.
- Orthodontists and dental professionals with a minimum of five years of experience.
- Members of the general public with no prior orthodontic treatment experience.
- Participants willing to provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals below the age of 16.
- Participants unwilling to provide informed consent.
- Orthodontists and dental professionals with less than five years of experience.
- Participants with incomplete or unresponsive survey or interview data.
- Individuals unable to communicate effectively in the language used for data collection.

Limitations of the Study

The study faced certain limitations. The geographic scope was restricted due to resource and time constraints, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Self-reported data from participants could introduce bias, as respondents might overstate or understate their beliefs and experiences. Additionally, challenges arose in validating some online secondary data, as the credibility of certain blogs and forums could not be fully ascertained. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into orthodontic myths and their impact.

PRISMA flowchart of study is shown in [Figure 3]:

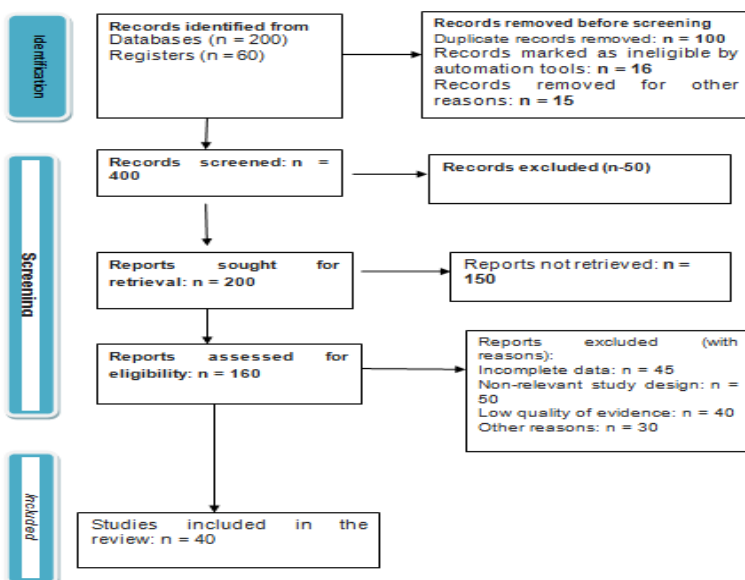


Figure 3: Prisma flowchart

5. Discussion:

Despite increasing awareness and understanding of orthodontics, numerous misconceptions continue to influence public perceptions, behaviors, and overall well-being. These misunderstandings must be addressed to help individuals fully take advantage of the orthodontic resources available to them [13]. Over the years, orthodontic treatments have significantly advanced, with continuous innovations driving the field forward. However, many myths remain, making it crucial for orthodontists to dispel these false beliefs during initial consultations [14]. Public health campaigns and educational programs can be particularly effective if they focus on challenging culturally ingrained misconceptions. These myths are often discussed in professional development sessions for dental care providers, such as dentists, hygienists, and nurses [15]. By confronting these misunderstandings, orthodontists, dentists and healthcare providers can increase awareness, offer more empathetic care, and ultimately clear up these widespread misconceptions. One prevalent myth is that orthodontic treatment is purely for cosmetic purposes. While orthodontics certainly enhances appearance, its primary focus is on improving functional stability, structural balance, and long-term oral health [16]. Another common misconception is that orthodontic treatment prevents individuals from playing wind instruments. In fact, most individuals can return to their musical activities after a brief adjustment period.

Some also mistakenly believe that orthodontic extractions, particularly the removal of premolars, cause vision problems, but there is no scientific evidence to support this claim [17]. Another common misconception is that braces trigger metal detectors, but in reality, modern braces are crafted from lightweight materials that do not set off alarms. Similarly, the belief that orthodontic treatment increases the risk of being struck by lightning is unfounded and has no scientific backing [18]. Gone are the days when orthodontic treatments were associated with intense discomfort. Today's braces and appliances are much more comfortable, using flexible, biocompatible materials that apply controlled forces. Although mild discomfort may occur during treatment, it is typically far less severe than expected, as many of the myths surrounding orthodontic pain have been exaggerated [19]. While orthodontic devices are effective in aligning teeth, permanent results depend on following post-treatment guidelines, such as wearing a retainer. Treatment can even begin before all permanent teeth have erupted, with the American Association of Orthodontists recommending a consultation around age 7. Early preventive or interceptive treatments, such as growth modulation procedures, can offer significant benefits. Contrary to what some believe, there is no need to eliminate favorite foods entirely; cutting food into smaller pieces makes it much easier to eat. Most people's speech remains unaffected by orthodontic appliances, although it may take some time to adjust to components placed behind the teeth [20]. Treatment typically lasts around 18 months, though less complex cases can be resolved more quickly, while more severe issues may take longer. Frequent adjustments do not speed up treatment; applying excessive force too frequently can damage tissues and delay progress [21]. Orthodontics is not just for straightening misaligned or crowded teeth; it also addresses various dental health issues, such as gaps, missing teeth, open bites, deep overbites, clefts, and craniofacial disorders. Although some discomfort is normal at the beginning of treatment or after adjustments, orthodontic treatment should not be excruciating. Advancements in orthodontic technology have made treatments more comfortable than ever before. If soreness occurs, over-the-counter pain relievers and

professional advice from orthodontist can help manage it effectively [22]. Orthodontic treatment, when carried out by a skilled and qualified orthodontist, is safe and carries minimal risks. Braces and aligners are made from biocompatible materials that do not pose a threat to overall health. Maintaining excellent oral hygiene is crucial during treatment to prevent issues such as tooth decay or periodontal disease, and regular check-ups with orthodontist will ensure that treatment progresses smoothly and safely [23]. While orthodontic treatment undoubtedly enhances the appearance of smile, its benefits go far beyond cosmetic improvements. Properly aligned teeth improve essential oral functions like chewing and speaking, help resolve bite issues, alleviate jaw pain, and lower the risk of dental problems such as frequent cavities. Consulting with an experienced orthodontist is key to understanding how treatment can not only improve smile but also enhance overall oral health. Debunking these myths is vital in helping individuals make informed choices about their oral care, maximizing the full potential of orthodontic treatment for both functional and aesthetic benefits [24]. [Table 1] debunks common myths about orthodontic treatments, providing facts, credible sources, and key findings. It aims to educate individuals on the realities of orthodontics, addressing concerns like pain, treatment duration, costs, and effectiveness. The table highlights how technological advancements, flexible payment options, and the broad applicability of orthodontics make it accessible and beneficial for patients of all ages and varying dental conditions [25-31].

Table 1: Debunking myths: realities of orthodontic treatment

Myth	Fact	Source	Key Findings
Braces are extremely painful.	Braces may cause mild discomfort initially or after adjustments, but this is temporary and manageable. Innovations in materials have made modern braces more comfortable.	American Association of Orthodontists	Braces today use lighter forces and more comfortable materials, reducing discomfort significantly. Clear aligners are an even more comfortable alternative.
Orthodontic treatment is just for cosmetic purposes.	Orthodontics improves both appearance and function. Misalignment can lead to problems with chewing, speaking, and breathing, and increase the risk of dental issues like cavities and gum disease.	Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic	Proper orthodontic treatment addresses underlying health problems, such as TMJ disorders and bite issues, improving overall oral health and quality of life
Braces take too long to work.	Treatment time varies depending on the severity of the issue, but technological advancements like 3D imaging and clear aligners have reduced treatment duration for many patients.	Journal of Clinical Orthodontics	New technologies have streamlined the planning process and allowed for more efficient treatment timelines, with clear aligners providing faster results for mild cases.
Orthodontics is too expensive.	With proper planning and insurance, orthodontic treatment can be affordable.	American Dental Association	The long-term benefits, such as improved dental health and self-confidence, often outweigh

	Many dental insurance plans offer coverage, and most orthodontists provide flexible payment options.		the initial cost. Flexible payment plans and insurance coverage make treatment more accessible.
After braces, teeth will never shift.	Retainers are essential for maintaining results after braces are removed. Without wearing retainers, teeth may shift back over time.	American Association of orthodontists, Cleveland Clinic	Retainers help to stabilize teeth and prevent shifting after braces are removed. Adhering to orthodontist guidelines ensures long-lasting results
Only teenagers can benefit from orthodontics.	Orthodontic treatment can be effective for people of all ages, from children to adults. Many adults seek orthodontics for aesthetic reasons or to address functional issues.	PubMed, American Association of Orthodontists	Orthodontic treatment is not limited by age. Adults can benefit from treatment, with advancements in clear aligners offering discrete options for them.
Clear aligners are only for minor corrections.	Clear aligners are suitable for a wide range of cases, including both mild and moderate misalignments. They are increasingly effective for more complex dental issues as technology improves.	Journal of Clinical Orthodontics, American Association of Orthodontists	Clear aligners have evolved to treat more complex issues, such as severe crowding or misaligned bites, thanks to advances in planning and manufacturing.

6. Future Prospects:

Faster, discreet solutions: With the increasing demand for aesthetic treatments and adult orthodontics, future options will likely focus on faster and more discreet solutions.

AI-driven treatment planning: AI technology will help create more personalized and effective treatment plans, optimizing the orthodontic process.

Reduced discomfort: Advanced materials and digital technologies will further reduce discomfort, while smart braces and aligners that track progress in real-time will adjust more precisely, minimizing discomfort during treatment [32].

Customized treatment options: Innovations in 3D printing and digital scanning will enable more tailored treatments, offering faster and less visible options suited to an individual’s dental structure and lifestyle.

Improved treatment efficiency: AI and machine learning will likely enhance treatment efficiency, reducing the overall duration of orthodontic care.

Predictive technology: Predictive tools will allow for more accurate treatment plans, leading to faster and more effective results [33].

Integration with healthcare: Orthodontics will become more integrated with other areas of healthcare, focusing on long-term health outcomes in addition to cosmetic benefits.

Teleorthodontics: The rise of telemedicine and digital orthodontics will reduce costs and increase access to remote care, making at-home treatments more feasible.

Cost-effective treatments: As technology advances, orthodontic treatments will likely become more affordable, easier to use, and potentially covered by insurance [34].

Smarter retainers: The development of more comfortable and effective retainers, possibly with smart technology, will simplify post-treatment care [35].

Revolutionized access to care: Teleorthodontics, which enables remote monitoring and adjustments, has the potential to transform orthodontic care by making it more convenient and accessible.

Holistic approach: As orthodontics increasingly focuses on both cosmetic and overall health benefits, it will become an essential part of holistic dental care.

Empowered patient choices: With these advancements, patients will have access to more efficient, personalized care, ensuring healthier smiles and long-term dental health [36].

Conclusion: Orthodontic treatment offers life-changing benefits for all ages, improving teeth alignment, bite function, and oral health. Myths, such as braces being only for teens or treatment being painful and expensive, often discourage people from seeking care. Debunking these misconceptions helps individuals make informed decisions and choose effective treatment options. Whether choosing traditional braces, clear aligners, or other solutions, orthodontics is accessible and transformative at any age. Understanding the truth behind common orthodontic myths is essential. Advancements in orthodontics have made treatments more comfortable, efficient, and available. With flexible appliances, clear aligners, and AI-powered planning, the future promises faster, more personalized and less invasive solutions. As technology progresses, orthodontics will become more effective, affordable, and integrated with healthcare. By embracing the facts, patients can make empowered choices for a healthier smile and lasting self-confidence.

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