



STRAIGHT TALK

Dr. Bernice Parisi, with an office in Caernarvon Township, is among the first orthodontists nationwide certified to offer a new system of braces for teeth. She offers iBraces, which are attached to the back of the teeth rather than the front.



iBraces, front, are compared to conventional braces, which attach to the front of the teeth.



Orthodontist Dr. Bernice M. Parisi holds an example of iBraces, which attach to the back of the teeth rather than the front.

What are invisible braces?

- They are lingual braces bonded behind — and therefore hidden — rather than in front of the teeth.
- Low-profile brackets are 100 percent customized to an individual's teeth.
- The braces are made from a gold alloy with no nickel content.
- LingualCare, a 3M Unitek Company, is the maker of the iBraces Appliance System (so-called invisible or hidden braces). It bills itself as the only company offering the "customized invisible fixed appliance system on the U.S. market today."

Benefits of invisible braces

- 100 percent customized, adapted to a patient's tooth anatomy.
- Aesthetics, braces hidden from view
- Minimal speech interference.
- Minimal tongue irritation.
- Customized wires that do not require adjustments meaning fewer appointments and less discomfort throughout treatment.
- Quicker treatments compared to conventional braces.
- Prevention of white spots caused by decalcification on the front of teeth.
- Touted as an excellent option for adults and teens who are involved in activities where labial (front of the teeth) braces would be problematic such as in band, sports, drama or modeling.

How are invisible braces made?

- Doctor takes precise impression of patient's teeth and sends the impression to LingualCare., maker of the iBraces Appliance System.
- Models are scanned into a computer where brackets are designed by lab technicians. CAD/CAM technology is used to design and fabricate customized braces with each bracket and wire to fit each tooth.
- In some cases, the invisible iBraces are 70 percent smaller than regular lingual braces, which promoters say translates to less of a physical impact on tongue and speech.
- Customized braces delivered to the doctor's office for a patient's bonding appointment. Source: LingualCare, makers of iBraces

Caring for braces

While hidden braces behind the teeth promise patients less discomfort because of their smallness and customization, they don't promise no discomfort.

Those wearing braces are always urged to avoid certain foods — ice, corn chips, hard edges of pizza crust, popcorn kernels caramels, sticky or soft foods, bubble gum, taffy and hard candy.

If a patient's tongue, lips or teeth become sore in the first few weeks of wearing braces, a warm water and salt mixture to rinse the mouth can be used five or six times a day.

If something feels loose or broken in your braces (brackets, wires or o-rings), call your orthodontist immediately.

By Bruce R. Posten
Reading Eagle

About Dr. Bernice Parisi

Education

- Graduate of Holy Name High School.
 - Bachelor of arts degree from Villanova University.
 - Graduate of University of Pennsylvania Dental School.
 - She completed her dental training at Eastman Dental Center, Rochester, N.Y. in 1989, and also wrote a senior research paper on lingual orthodontics (behind-the-teeth braces).
 - She specializes in pediatric, adolescent and adult orthodontics.
 - She has been in private practice for 19 years.
- Family:** Husband, Dean Exas, 51, sales manager of orthodontics products. Three step-children.
- Hobbies:** Playing piano and amateur photography.

20,000 patients worldwide have been treated with the iBraces system.

Bonding appointment

Parisi said her first iBraces patient is scheduled for a bonding appointment in January.

"Many patients, particularly adult professionals and older teens, want to have their teeth straightened, but are not comfortable wearing traditional braces," Parisi said. "iBraces is an option ... particularly good for patients who ask for clear aligners but have more moderate or severe teeth crowding or spacing problems. This (invisible braces) can be a much better alternative."

But these invisible braces are not cheap — \$8,000 to \$10,000 — compared to other braces that can be obtained for roughly half the price, according to Parisi.

"The treatment period is usually shorter and because the braces are small and so customized with state-of-the-art technology for individual tooth brackets and wires, they are much more comfortable," she said.

Another plus of the new invisible braces, Parisi said, is that they are made of a malleable

Factors to consider

Costs, comfort and time are all factors to consider when patients opt for teeth-straightening braces, according to Berks County orthodontist Dr. Bernice Parisi.

She is one of hundreds of orthodontists nationwide certified to provide iBraces, so-called hidden or invisible braces bonded at the back of the teeth.

Parisi said regular braces can cost patients anywhere from \$4,500 to \$5,500 and average treatment time (wearing of braces) can run from two to three years.

The hidden iBraces, with their aesthetic benefit, are more expensive, ranging in price from \$8,000 to \$10,000, but also are said to cut treatment time down to 15 months to two years.

gold alloy and do not have any nickel content that can sometimes prompt allergic reactions.

"The typical patient is a teenager or adult who does not want to wear braces but needs orthodontic treatment," said Lea Nesbit, chief executive officer of LingualCare. "Patients range from boys and girls who play football and other high-impact sports to corporate executives."

"I'd estimate there are 8,500 orthodontists in the nation and 600 or 700 of them are trained in doing our procedure," she said. "For the past five years, we have been slowly and surely making inroads into the marketplace."

Different instruments

Parisi said the iBraces system

and straight, so they are easier to clean to avoid bacteria and periodontal disease. People want to ensure that their teeth keep functioning well into old age.

"Studies have shown that not having good dental health may lead to serious physical problems from hardening of the arteries to strokes to pancreatic cancer."

One of nine siblings, Parisi said she got into the orthodontics field because of her father. She has a sister who also is an orthodontist.

"I saw that my father enjoyed what he did and that's really what drew me to this field," she said.

Parisi said she has about 250 patients and 75 percent are school-aged and 25 percent are adults.

"Ideally, braces are placed on young people when the jaw and teeth are growing, so getting the right alignment is important," she said. "But I also see adults who have had dental issues or never could afford orthodontic work, but now find they want their teeth straightened."

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requires the orthodontist to have different instruments. She also said the clinical technique of bonding braces behind the teeth can be a little more difficult than frontal teeth procedures.

In the last 50 to 60 years, the quest for improved appearance and healthy function of teeth have been driving forces sending patients to orthodontists. Such trends as having colorful elastic ties on braces, often preferred by children, also have kept the wearing of braces in the spotlight.

"For certain, people have become more aware of their smiles and self-image," Parisi said. "But along with that is the increase in knowledge about the importance in keeping one's teeth healthy