



Smiling from

Bet Shemesh to Jerusalem

with Smile Talk

BY DR. LAVI AND DR. GHERMAN

Adult Orthodontics *Beyond A Beautiful Smile*

With the advent of smaller, more comfortable and less noticeable braces, more and more adults are choosing to straighten their teeth these days.

We find that most adult patients approach the orthodontic office with some trepidation. This apprehension typically stems from a combination of the following reasons: "Braces are for young people, my teeth and gums are probably too 'old' to move at this point." "I can't walk around looking like I'm twelve and expect to be taken seriously." "I have too many obligations in life to worry about cleaning between my braces everyday and dealing with the discomfort." "I've made it this far without braces, there's no point in rocking the boat."

In fact, many of the adults that do come in to the office are almost apologetic and embarrassed that they are considering braces, as if considering orthodontics as an adult is a sign of vanity or frivolity.

The truth is that braces are often more important for adults than they are for children. It is important that we educate our patients about the very important oral health benefits of orthodontic treatment, especially for adults.

As we age, the name of the game in maintaining oral health is "bone support." Think of your teeth as poles in cement. If the cement wears away, the poles start to tilt and eventually can come out. So are the teeth. In a child, poor periodontal health usually results in red puffy gums or "gingivitis." Over time, however, the bone underneath the gums begins

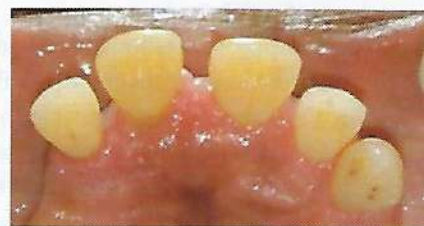
to erode as well. This is called "periodontitis." **It is extremely difficult to prevent periodontitis from developing and getting worse when the teeth are not straight!** This is because periodontitis is caused by bacteria that collect in the crevices and folds of the underlying bone. Straight teeth mean smooth bone underneath and a cleanable dentition that avoids periodontal problems. Patients who already have periodontal problems also benefit greatly from orthodontics. Very often periodontal breakdown leads to teeth that have shifted and unwanted spaces that are now present. Sometimes a food trap persists which can cause more bone loss.

Did you know that when teeth are moved in a healthy environment, new bone is formed?

Bone is made of cells called osteoblasts and osteoclasts. When gentle pressure is placed on a tooth, the osteoclasts remove bone creating a path for the teeth to move while the osteoblasts lay down new bone. Even patients with many loose or periodontally hopeless teeth often benefit from the bone growth that orthodontic treatment can provide around those teeth or in preparation for implants. The sooner you address these nagging dental issues, the more effective and successful your orthodontic treatment will be.

One important note must be stressed. Orthodontic movement is, at its core, an inflammatory process. New healthy bone can therefore only be formed if the teeth and gums are clean and healthy and no other bone diseases such as active periodontitis or osteoporosis exist.

Many adult patients declare, "I'm probably your oldest patient." The oldest patient we ever treated was 89 years old at the time (2002)! So ask your dentist or stop in for a free consultation to see if you are a candidate for adult braces....and go beyond the beautiful smile.



This adult woman had lost many of her back teeth and her front teeth were spaced because of bone loss.

We saved her front teeth and strengthened them with a small hidden wire. ■

About the Author

Dr. Eliyahu Gherman is located at 15 Ibn Gevirol, Rechavia. The phone numbers are: 02-561-9770 and 02-561-9780. The hours are Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 8 a.m.-3 p.m.; Wednesday 8 a.m.-7 p.m. and Friday 8 a.m.-12 p.m.

Dr. Edo Lavi's office is located at 1 Nachal Tamar, Ramat Bet Shemesh. The phone number is: 02-992-3363.