

Do-It-Yourself Dentistry: Protecting Patients



In 2020, the Iowa Dental Association (IDA) supported a bill requiring either an in-person exam or proof of a recent in-person dental exam before beginning orthodontic treatment. Teledentistry has the potential to increase access to care in Iowa, but it cannot be at the cost of patient safety. Certain diagnoses and evaluations can only be performed through an in-person examination. Orthodontic treatment should not be undertaken without reviewing the diagnostic information gathered during an in-person examination. IDA urges lawmakers to ***pass legislation that will protect patients before they begin any orthodontia treatment.***

Straight From the Headlines

“What’s more, her orthodontist said the **crossbite was causing other symptoms: strain in her neck and jaw muscles, which led to migraines.**” — *NBC News, “Things didn’t feel right”, February 2020*

“ **‘I need to know the health of the supporting gum tissue and bones. I need to know whether there’s any pathology or other things that might impact the treatment.’** ”

— *New York Post, “At-home invisible teeth aligners could come back to bite you”, April 2019*

“Potential users check a consent form **saying they have had their teeth examined and X-rayed by a dentist, but are not asked to verify that. The form also states that they cannot sue the company for any reason.**”

— *Independent, “The dentistry company causing smiles to turn into frowns”, January 2020*

“There are also thousands of complaints from patients online. Some complainants say [company] hurt their teeth. Others ask the company to follow stricter regulations with a licensed orthodontist **taking x-rays and overseeing care.**” — *Boston 25 News, “Dentists, lawmakers call for more regulation of DIY orthodontics”, February 2020*

“Often times, an orthodontist will want the patient up to date with their dentist visits. They’ll also do X-rays prior to treatment, making sure there are no signs of gum disease or large cavities. **If the DIY retailers don’t ask for X-rays, [Herman] Ostrow [School of Dentistry of USC] experts and alumni say to think twice.**”

— *Medical Press, “DIY braces? Orthodontists say to think twice before straightening your teeth solo”, December 2018*

Access to Healthcare

Do-it-yourself dental products are not a solution to the access to care issue, as they are not intended to offer medically necessary treatments or any correction that is not mild-to-moderate. The intent of DIY products is primarily to improve aesthetic appearance of teeth (not serve as a substitute for traditional braces). In some cases, patients discontinue treatment due to lack of results with little recourse.





Ensuring Patient Safety

The standard of care for developing an orthodontic treatment plan includes reviewing the patient's medical history, radiographs, etc., taken during a recent in-person dental exam. Serious oral health conditions can go undiagnosed without a hands-on exam, such as:

- ***Gum disease***
- ***Advanced decay***
- ***Cancer (Oral/Head and Neck)***
- ***Periodontal problems***
- ***Unidentified/unrepaired cavities***
- ***Loose or defective fillings, crowns, and bridges***
- ***Impacted teeth***
- ***Temporal Mandibular Dysfunction (TMD)***

Beginning orthodontic treatment with an undiagnosed condition can lead to serious and preventable issues such as:

- ***Pain***
- ***Tooth loss***
- ***Gum recession***
- ***Shortened or resorbed roots***
- ***Loose or cracked teeth***
- ***Misaligned bite***
- ***TMD***



About IDA

Representing over 1,800 dentists, the IDA is the largest oral health association in Iowa. More than 80 percent of Iowa's practicing dentists are members of the IDA. The IDA's broad membership throughout the state and across all specialties reflects a unique commitment by dentists to work together to enhance their profession on behalf of their patients and all Iowans. Each member of the IDA is also a member of one of Iowa's 10 district dental societies and the American Dental Association.

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