

3M Unitek Introduces Revolutionary New Braces with Beauty and Brains

Clarity™ SL Braces Combine Clear Braces with More Efficient Tooth Movement

Combining the latest in braces technology and fashion, 3M Unitek Corp. introduces Clarity SL braces, a clear, self-ligating braces system. Made from translucent ceramic, Clarity SL braces are designed to blend in with teeth, help teeth move faster, and make braces easier to clean, while eliminating the less desirable appearance and hygiene issues of ordinary braces. Clarity SL braces are now available nationwide.

Unlike traditional braces, self-ligating braces such as Clarity SL and SmartClip™ brands from 3M Unitek do not need elastic bands (ligatures) to attach the wire to the brackets. Ligatures can slow down the teeth-moving process by causing friction or resistance, much like driving a car with the emergency brake on. Eliminating elastics reduces friction and can help the braces work more efficiently.

With the introduction of Clarity SL braces, consumers do not have to choose between clear and self-ligating braces. They can get both in one system.

“For the first time, adults and children who need braces no longer have to trade off looks or performance to achieve a beautiful smile,” said Anoop Sondhi, DDS, MS, an orthodontist in Indianapolis, Ind. “Clarity SL braces are an important new option, especially for teens and adults, who often want less visible braces and to get their braces off as quickly as possible.”

Clarity SL braces use advanced technology 3M Unitek pioneered for its SmartClip Appliance System, the first truly self-ligating braces. Designed with sophisticated engineering and space-age material, these braces use a unique clip to hold the wires in place without elastic ligatures, yet carefully regulate force. With no mechanisms to slide or clog or become difficult to operate, these clips permit easy and simple wire insertion and removal. The result is less patient discomfort and more efficient treatment.

Self-ligating technology is one of the most significant modern innovations in orthodontics. According to the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO), the self-ligation market grew 40 percent from 2005 to 2006. Although conventional braces are still a good option, braces without elastic ligatures allow the use of lighter force, which can move teeth into position more efficiently and comfortably, shorten overall treatment time and may mean fewer and quicker visits for adjustments.

Ordinary braces, which are typically worn for 18 to 24 months, require time-consuming adjustments about every four to six weeks to change the elastics and wire. Since they do not use elastic ligatures, self-ligating braces may need adjusting only every two or three months, depending on the stage of treatment. In addition, the intelligent clip mechanism of Clarity SL and SmartClip braces allows the orthodontist to easily insert and remove the wire, helping to reduce chair time at each visit.

“Today, most patients and their parents have extremely busy schedules, and it can be difficult finding the time or taking off from work or school for frequent adjustments and changing ligatures,” said Dr. Patrice Pellerin, an orthodontist in Quebec, Canada. “The convenience of fewer and faster appointments over about 14 to 18 months of total treatment with Clarity SL braces is a great service to patients and orthodontists.”

Cosmetically and hygienically, self-ligating braces can help patients keep their braces and teeth cleaner. The elastic ligatures used with conventional braces can discolor and stain, drawing unwanted attention to the mouth. On a more serious level, the elastic bands can trap food and harbor bacteria, which promote tooth

decay. They also make brushing more difficult, making it a challenge to keep braces, teeth and gums clean. Self-ligating braces can offer improved patient hygiene and help increase patient confidence during treatment.

According to the AAO, nearly 5.5 million Americans wear braces. Although about 80 percent of them are children and teens, more adults than ever are beautifying their smiles due to the growing variety of appliances. From 1994 to 2004, the number of adult patients grew 37 percent.

3M Unitek: a leader in orthodontic innovation

Clarity SL braces are the latest innovation from 3M Unitek, meeting the challenge to develop a bracket with the optimum combination of aesthetics and efficiency. Using advanced technology, the bracket combines the aesthetic properties of Clarity Ceramic Brackets with the technology of SmartClip Self-Ligating Brackets.

Since its founding in 1948, 3M Unitek has been committed to orthodontics, introducing industry milestone products such as the first stainless steel brackets, adhesive pre-coated brackets, color changing bonding adhesive and true self-ligating brackets. Today, 3M Unitek delivers its more than 14,000 products and innovative orthodontic solutions worldwide, and takes a leadership position in the industry based upon its unwavering commitment to superior customer service and the highest quality products and services. For more information, visit www.3MBraces.com.

About 3M Health Care

3M Health Care, one of 3M's six major business segments, provides world-class innovative products and services to help health care professionals improve the practice, delivery and outcome of patient care in medical, oral care, drug delivery and health information markets.

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Every day, 3M people find new ways to make amazing things happen. Wherever they are, whatever they do, the company's customers know they can rely on 3M to help make their lives better. 3M's brands include Scotch, Post-it, Scotchgard, Thinsulate, Scotch-Brite, Filtrete, Command and Vikuiti. Serving customers around the world, the people of 3M use their expertise, technologies and global strength to lead in major markets including consumer and office; display and graphics; electronics and telecommunications; safety, security and protection services; health care; industrial and transportation. For more information, including the latest product and technology news, visit www.3M.com.

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Note to editors:

Embracing braces – hot tips for patients and parents

This is an exciting time for people who are considering braces. Not all appliances – or dental professionals – are the same, and consumers may not realize there are options. The following tips can help patients and parents make more informed choices about straightening their teeth.

Children should be *screened* for potential bite and alignment problems at about age 7 or 8, although they do not usually get braces until all the permanent teeth are in (about age 11 or 12). Not all dentists and orthodontists are the same or have the same level of training. Find a qualified specialist who you are comfortable with by doing some research and asking for recommendations from people in your area. You have the right to expect a good explanation of your/your child's problem, why treatment is advisable and what is entailed in the treatment plan.

Go online to learn about the different kinds of braces so you can discuss various options with your orthodontist. Think about which type of braces fit your lifestyle – younger children may enjoy choosing different colored rubber bands as part of conventional systems; older children and adults tend to opt for less obvious braces. Modern braces that are both aesthetically pleasing and work more efficiently are now available. Ask the dental professional how long your total treatment will be, and how often you will need to be seen with different types of appliances. Once you have braces, carefully follow the instructions of your orthodontist or dentist. Your full cooperation will help ensure your treatment goes according to plan. Avoid hard or sticky candy, gum and other chewy foods while wearing braces to help prevent breaking them. Keeping your teeth and braces clean is an essential part of good oral hygiene and avoiding tooth decay and gum disease. Spend extra time brushing. Special brush tips, flosses and rinses are available to make the task easier. Raise your dental IQ. To learn more about the latest advances in braces, or the health and cosmetic benefits of straighter teeth, visit the American Association of Orthodontists at www.braces.org. To learn more about 3M Unitek and its innovative products or to find an orthodontist familiar with new braces technology, visit www.3Mbraces.com.

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