



## Orthodontics And The Superstitious Old Wives' Tales...

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### ABSTRACT:

Orthodontic mechanotherapy has come a long way with recent innovations doing the rounds every now and then. However, there still are innumerable misconceptions regarding the same... In order to help the treatment seekers sort fact from fiction, it becomes imperative for the treatment providing orthodontist to dispel the most common myths about therapy during the initial consultations. Also, health education and public health activities would benefit if specific myths attributed to Orthodontic therapy, such as, migranes, weak eyesights, triggering of metal detector alarms, etc. were busted during orientation.

**Keywords:** Appliances, Myths, Orthodontic mechanotherapy, Superstitions

### Introduction :

Orthodontic mechanotherapy has come a long way in the recent years. Newer innovations are doing the rounds among the orthodontic fraternity every now and then. However, there still are innumerable misconceptions regarding the same... In order to help the treatment seekers sort fact from fiction, it becomes imperative for the treatment providing orthodontist to dispel the most common myths about therapy during the initial consultations. Many health education and public health activities undertaken by the entire dental fraternity would be benefited if specific superstitions peculiar to local cultures were explained during orientation and in service programs for dentists, hygienists, nurses and other health personnel such that in treating with compassion, we can bring about more awareness in the society<sup>1</sup> who attributes anything from loss in appetite and weight or weak eyesight to orthodontic mechanotherapy. We certainly need to converse treatment modalities within the scope of dentistry that are evidence-based<sup>2</sup>. These superstitions are discussed ahead.

#### 1. Orthodontics is only for aesthetics...!

While many patients visit the orthodontist for the cosmetic reasons, the benefits reach far beyond that. Orthodontists have specialized knowledge of the growth and development of jaws and teeth, airways and of the entire stomatognathic system. Orthodontic treatment aims to create functional stability, structural balance and aesthetic harmony, all the while ensuring good teeth & jaw health for a lifetime.

#### 2. One just cannot play wind instruments..!

A patient planning to undergo therapy might get worried about not being able to play a wind instrument, especially if they are to get fixed appliances. However, the fact is that even with these appliances on, one can create beautiful music. A slight adjustment period initially is probably all that's needed, but soon, they'll be able to keep up with practices and performances.

#### 3. One can have weak eyesight due to orthodontic extractions!

Many people, especially in rural settings, feel that orthodontic extractions must be avoided at all costs as it will lead to loss of eyesight. In fact, most refusals of orthodontic treatment are due to fear of losing eyesight as premolars are near to eye area<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4. They are going to make metal detectors go wild..!

These patients may be worried about setting off alarms every time they walk through metal detectors or airports, but, modern braces are tiny and made from incredibly light metals that don't trigger alarms.

#### 5. They increase one's chances to be struck by lightning..!

For the reasons quoted above, they also have nothing to do with chances of getting struck by lightning!

#### 6. These appliances are only for the young!

For years, everyone has associated orthodontic appliances with the teenage years. Yet, orthodontic treatment is available to all age groups who want a healthy dentition and smile. In fact, some people claim that this treatment causes premature ageing.<sup>4</sup>

### 7. All appliances must be tight and sore to actually work!

Gone are the days of orthodontics being uncomfortably painful and sore. Contemporary appliances and materials are far more promising and comfortable by virtue of being more flexible, biologically inert and exerting more controlled forces. There are instances of discomfort as teeth move, but, myths about treatment and pain are usually disproportionate to the actual level of discomfort.

### 8. Orthodontic appliances have permanent results!

Although a highly effective way of aligning teeth, they are certainly not having permanent results. Relapse can only be prevented if the crucial recommendations by the orthodontist are followed to wear a retainer.

### 9. All permanent teeth must erupt prior to orthodontic mechanotherapy!

Some of the most comprehensive orthodontic treatments usually start in preteens or teenage. However, the American Association of Orthodontists recommends the first Orthodontic visit around 7 years of age<sup>5</sup>. Many children can benefit from early preventive and interceptive treatments or growth modulation procedures.

### 10. One must sacrifice favourite foods!

It's a fact that having these appliances means avoiding some foods. It's best to stay away from hard and sticky foods. But, it's a myth that the normal diet needs to be sacrificed. One might just need to cut things thinner and take smaller bites.

### 11. Everybody gets a lisp with orthodontic appliances!

With traditional metallic, ceramic or clear aligners, one's speech should not change. However, some appliance components are placed lingually behind the teeth and close to the tongue. These might take some time to get used to, and impact speech temporarily.

### 12. Treatment takes forever!

This is somewhat of a myth, too. Orthodontic treatment generally takes around 18 months, depending on the severity of malocclusion. Sometimes, results with minor crowding are achieved in an even shorter amount of time, while more severe issues can take longer.<sup>6</sup>

### 13. More frequent activations means faster treatment!

More frequent activations will not make treatment any quicker. Just because heavier force is applied more frequently doesn't mean that the appliances will come off any sooner. In fact, if the process is forced, iatrogenic damage to tissue can lead to more problems later in life. Slow and steady always wins the race here.

### 14. Orthodontics only works if teeth are crooked and crowded!

While Orthodontic treatment certainly helps correct crooked teeth, it also helps with a wide range of other dental health problems like spaces, missing teeth, open bite, deep overbites, clefts and other craniofacial anomalies, etc.

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## Conclusion :

Whether one is 8 or 80, there are innumerable appliances to suit the orthodontic needs. From traditional metal braces to barely noticeable ceramic, lingual or clear aligners, it's time to set the record straight and bust all old wives' tales causing apprehension about orthodontic care. It has indeed become imperative for the orthodontists to dismiss the common folklore about therapy during the initial consultations. Public health activities undertaken by the entire dental fraternity would be benefited if specific superstitions peculiar to local cultures were explained during orientation such that, in treating with compassion, we can bring about more awareness in the society who attributes anything from a migraine or weak eyesight to being struck by lightning all to orthodontic mechanotherapy!!

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