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Informational Sheet

ALF (Advanced Lightwire Functionals)

What does the ALF do?

This appliance is a non-traditional orthodontic treatment approach. The ALF advances the mandible and promotes changes in muscle function to achieve stable results in promoting proper facial development, tooth alignment, airway enlargement, improved posture and corrected sensory impulses within the nervous system.

What are the advantages of ALF?

Convenience: ALF patients enjoy easier flossing and the ability to brush their teeth more thoroughly than do those with traditional braces.

Cosmetics: ALF is nearly invisible when being worn by the patient.

Gentle pressure: Patients experience significantly less discomfort than do those with traditional braces.

Time savings: Dental visits are usually needed only every 6 to 8 weeks.

Wellness enhancement: Promotes proper facial development, airway enlargement, and improved posture.

Braces or ALF?

The ALF appliance is a far better appliance than braces for correcting tooth crowding. The reason for this is the ALF will create just enough room for the tongue and the teeth to fit in the mouth. The ALF also results in the jaw being the shape of the tongue rather than the arbitrary shape of a wire. The ALF expansion stops when the tongue stops pushing outward on the appliance. The tongue will do a majority of the work as it will press on the ALF wire and the teeth and this will be a big part of the force. Treatment time varies for every patient as everyone's case has a different complexity. Some cases can last 3-6 months or as long as 1-3 years. Naturally when teeth have enough room to fit, so does the tongue. This is the way things were naturally intended to be.

For patients seeking only to straighten their teeth or improve their bite, traditional braces are frequently effective and sufficient. However, some patients seeking orthodontic treatment experience additional

health issues for which ALF treatment can also be effective. When the designer of the ALF appliance, Dr. Darick Nordstrom, introduced the appliance in the 1980's, he quickly realized that his patients were experiencing relief from other health issues that had initially appeared to be unrelated. These included:

- Allergies resulting from restricted nasal airways
- Speech Impediments
- Sensory processing/nervous system dysfunction
- Clenching and grinding of teeth
- Airway constriction and breathing problems
- Developmental delays such as childhood learning problems due to decreased blood flow to the brain
- Digestive problems
- Ear Problems (ringing of humming sounds in the ears, decreased hearing ability)
- Fatigue
- Sleep Apnea
- Headaches (including migraines)
- Suboptimal posture and spinal alignment
- Neck and back pain resulting from misaligned vertebrae and nerve impingement
- TMJ (jaw joint) dysfunction with pain and restrictions of movement
- Vision problems (blurred vision, strained eyesight)
- Misalignment of teeth and poor occlusion

Seeing that ALF treatment can help patients achieve substantial change in other areas of their health as well as straight teeth, we can evaluate that overall health of each of our orthodontic patients and make treatment recommendations accordingly.

What age can patients benefit from ALF treatment?

Normally, treatment for children begins between ages 6 and 8, while the four-permanent front teeth are growing in. But some children may begin treatment as young as the age of 5. It is critical to remember that by age 4, 60% of an individual's facial growth is complete; and by age 6, 80% of the facial growth is complete. Because ALF promotes proper growth and development, treatment can be extremely effective when it is begun during a growth stage.

What may I expect during ALF treatment?

Dr. Shebani will slowly adjust the "omega" loops on the flexible ALF wire to slowly increase the diameter of the appliance. By increasing the diameter of the appliance, the effect is a light amount of pressure and stimulation of outward and larger jaw development. Promotion of a larger jaw will create more room space and more room for the teeth and this allowed better night time breathing.

Patients can expect to wear their appliances full time. The ALF appliance is nearly invisible from the outside, and for most patients, the adjustment period with the new appliance usually lasts two to three days. During this period, patients might find their speech affected while their tongues reposition. Reading aloud to oneself is recommended to help with the adjustment.

Oral Hygiene

It is extremely important to give careful attention to your oral hygiene, since food can get caught between the wire and your teeth. Patients must brush their teeth after each meal and minimize snacks, especially sugary snacks.

