

## Zoom meetings in the Covid pandemic drive rise in adults seeking teeth straightening treatment

'I know from patients I see at my practice that many have become increasingly more aware of their teeth through the Zoom effect,' an orthodontist tells i



Adults have become more aware of their teeth through video calls, according to dentists (Photo: Getty)

Back-to-back video meetings for work and evenings spent doing quizzes on Zoom during the coronavirus pandemic have given Britons a complex about their teeth.

Sixty per cent of orthodontists say they have seen a larger than expected demand for teeth straightening over the past 12 months as people have become more conscious of their smile, i can reveal.

More than half of patients want to get their teeth in shape due to social factors, while 65 per cent are more aware of the available orthodontics treatments, according to figures from the British Orthodontic Society (BOS) survey.

"It is interesting to see the rise in demand for orthodontic treatment over the last 12 months. I know from patients I see at my practice that many have become increasingly more aware of their teeth through the 'Zoom effect'," said Anjali Patel, director of external relations at BOS.

Teeth straightening usually requires treatment through fixed braces or removable aligners.

The BOS survey showed that 84 per cent of orthodontists had seen a rise in adult patients, with the vast majority being women aged between 26 and 55.

Cosmetic dentist Dr Sam Jethwa, director of communications at the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, said his colleagues had also noticed a surge in enquiries driven by “Zoom smile anxiety”.

“The increase in video calling over the last year has meant that people are much more aware of how they look when they talk.”

This is what happened to Paul Ismail, who began working from home during the pandemic, dialling into three video calls a day.

Upon seeing his face on the screen, the 39-year-old’s reaction was: “Oh my god, is that how I look, is that how I sound, is that how crooked my teeth are at the top?”

After some research, he decided to invest in Invisalign treatment, which uses clear aligners to improve teeth.,

“The fashion now... is straighter teeth,” said Mr Ismail. “It’s not necessarily that people have really bad teeth, it’s the influence of America where people want the perfect Hollywood smile.”



Mr Ismail, who works in finance marketing, lives in Liverpool but used to commute to Salford every day. The money saved by not having to travel covered the £2,800 for his 14-week treatment, which he finished last week.

“Really simple process, you will be given invisible braces that nobody will know are in apart from you. You wear them 23 hours a day, so you really need to rush your meals.

“If you’re unhappy with the results you can keep going [with] what they call refinements. There are people who will have refinements for five years because they want to look like Brad Pitt or Julia Roberts. Unfortunately, alas, straight teeth aren’t going to make you look like a Hollywood star... you’re just going to have a better bite.”

Another benefit of working from home was that no one noticed Mr Ismail’s Invisalign. Sadly though, Covid-19 restrictions mean no one has been able to see the results yet either.

Penelope Mason, 37, from west London, also found that video calls were the catalyst for getting her teeth straightened.

“I had been aware of the misalignment of my teeth for some time but when I was confronted by the way they looked every day because of Zoom calls and found it very disconcerting – and in fact distracting – when I should have been concentrating on what was being said on the calls, I was actually focussing on my teeth,” she said.

Dr Chaw-Su Kyi, who founded West London Orthodontists and worked on Ms Mason’s teeth, said half of the enquiries she had received were for discrete dental treatments such as Invisalign.

But some people have been emboldened to get braces because they can be concealed by face masks.

“I strongly believe that masks have made many patients a lot more open to more overtly obvious dental straightening treatments, such as traditional braces. I’ve had several patients explain that no one will see their teeth behind their mask, and they view this window of mask wearing as an opportunity to straighten their teeth ahead of re-entering a non-mask wearing world,” said Dr Kyi.