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Modelling a dental brace no-one noticed

IF YOU were asked to describe Julia Roberts' looks, chances are you'd start with her famous wide smile. You wouldn't be alone as she recently came first among her fellow celebrities in Oral B's smile poll. And you'd also be envious of her toothy grin – well, at least 80pc of you would.

An incredible four out of five people keep their mouths firmly shut when they're being photographed because they're so self-conscious about yellowing, grey, chipped, cracked, crowded or uneven teeth. And one in three people is considering getting something done about it, according to the British Academy Of Cosmetic Dentistry.

Roberta Rawat (right) knows exactly how they feel. She may be a model and used to being photographed in any manner of weird and wonderful positions, but the 32-year-old South African has always been conscious of her crooked and crowded top front teeth.

Although it hasn't stopped her working, she had always planned to get her teeth sorted

when she was finished modelling.

Wearing old-school big metal braces simply wasn't an option because of the potentially detrimental effect on her income. But then she heard about a type of invisible braces called Invisalign.

These involve a series of clear, removable aligners to straighten your teeth without metal wires or brackets.

Invisalign clear aligners are custom-moulded for the individual patient's teeth and allow normal brushing and eating.

You wear each set of aligners for about two weeks, removing them only to eat, drink, brush and floss.

As you replace each aligner with the next, your teeth will move – little by little, week by week – until they have straightened to the final position prescribed by your dentist.

The average treatment time is about one year, but it can be faster if fewer movements are needed, and it's suitable for those aged 16 and older. They're also good for people who had braces as children but perhaps



didn't wear their retainers quite as much as they should have.

It involves treatment every six weeks, and involves getting a 3D computer simulation of the current situation and using

software to plan where the teeth should be. The simulation indicates the number of aligners you'll need, so you'll know exactly where you stand before embarking on any treatment.

Roberta says that before finding out about Invisalign, she always thought her teeth would be crooked, but these braces are so unobtrusive and pain-free that she can highly recommend them.

"I know some people are afraid of dentists, but after my experience, I can honestly say you won't feel a thing."

It'll take six months to straighten her teeth. She has to wear the aligners full-time for about 28 weeks, followed by retainers for six months at night.

Her initial consultation was pretty straightforward. The dentist made a mould of her upper teeth, which took about 20 minutes.

"It didn't hurt, I just felt a little discomfort when he removed the mould. I've been wearing them for seven weeks now and already I can see the difference.

According to a spokesperson for the Seapoint Clinic in Blackrock, Co Dublin, where Roberta had her braces done, the toughest time to have braces is the first week or so. "After that, you should be able to eat and speak normally, and you shouldn't experience any soreness."

Roberta definitely agrees with that assessment. Her teeth did

hurt a little during the first two weeks, but "by now [seven weeks in] it feels normal, and they don't bother me at all. I take them out when I'm eating or drinking something hot and then put them straight back on.

"I've been working every day since getting them, and believe me when I say that not one person has noticed them. How amazing is that?"

For more information, contact the Seapoint Clinic in Blackrock, Co Dublin, 01 2842570, www.seapointclinic.ie

Apart from regular dental treatments, the clinic carries out cosmetic dentistry, which includes teeth straightening and reconstruction. It costs €5,000 for your upper teeth and €5,500 for both, and the braces are tax deductible.

The treatment is also available in Clane Hospital, Smiles Dental Clinic and the Ashbourne Dental Centre.

