

Consumer Alert from the AAO

Questions to Consider When Researching Direct-To-Consumer Orthodontic Companies (like SmileDirectClub, Candid Co., Smilelove, SnapCorrect, Orthly, Etc.)

Some online orthodontic companies make their treatment sound so easy. Perhaps you take a selfie and/or an impression of your teeth or get your teeth scanned. Next, you receive aligners in the mail and after so many months - straight teeth! Right? What else is there to think about?

Before you decide to proceed with a direct-to-consumer orthodontic company, the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) believes there are a number of factors and questions you may want to consider. For example, in some instances direct-to-consumer orthodontic companies do not involve the in-person evaluation and/or in-person supervision of your orthodontic treatment by an orthodontist. An in-person evaluation and in-person supervision throughout treatment can be very important, because there is more to creating a healthy, beautiful smile than moving the visible portions of your teeth.

Orthodontic treatment involves the movement of biological material, which if not done correctly could lead to potentially irreversible and expensive damage such as tooth and gum loss, changed bites, and other issues. For an example of a consumer who claims to have had an issue with his orthodontic treatment, [click here to view a news story](#).

Consider this question: What other transforming medical treatment would you undergo without an in-person, pre-treatment evaluation or ongoing in-person supervision from a medical professional.

Ask Questions, Get Answers

If you are researching orthodontic treatment (including treatment models from direct-to-consumer companies like SmileDirectClub, Candid Co., Smilelove, SnapCorrect, Orthly), here are a few questions you may want to consider:

1. As part of your treatment, are comprehensive diagnostic records like x-rays taken before your treatment?

YES

Does the treatment and fee include x-rays of your teeth and jaws?

Yes, when needed to augment comprehensive diagnostic records, the treating orthodontist will prescribe the appropriate radiographic imaging or request x-rays from the patient's general dentist. Minimizing the amount of radiation to the patient should be a factor in treatment.

Does the treatment and fee include a clinical examination of your jaw alignment, teeth, bite, and the relationship of your teeth to the skeletal structures?

Yes, the treating orthodontist conducts a clinical examination. This includes a review of the standardized ABO Collage (three extraoral/five intraoral photos), PVS impressions or intraoral scan, medical/dental form and informed consent. In addition, the treating Candid orthodontist or support team may utilize teledentistry technologies to obtain additional information as needed.

Does the treatment and fee include taking photographs of your face, facial profile, mouth, and teeth?

Yes, it includes an ABO Collage (three extraoral/five intraoral photos).

Does the treatment and fee include taking digital scans or other impressions of your teeth?

Yes, it includes PVS impressions or an intraoral scan.

NO - are you comfortable starting orthodontic treatment without comprehensive diagnostic

records? If you still want comprehensive diagnostic records taken, are you all right going to another dental professional to take them? If yes, what will that cost?

2. As part of your treatment fee, do you receive any in-person visits to a dentist's or orthodontist's office during your treatment? This question presumes that the only valid way to obtain limited treatment is in the traditional manner. Candid-affiliated retail locations will provide on-site teledentistry services.

YES

How many? What occurs during these in-person visits?

In person visits include intraoral scanning, patient support, and, as needed, teledental follow up and examination of patient records.

Is there a licensed dentist or orthodontist in the office to supervise the visits?

We lawfully operate under the relevant teledentistry law of each, most of which do not require a licensed orthodontist or dentist to directly supervise the taking of intraoral scans or digital images. These laws allow for greater patient access to this care.

NO - are you comfortable with orthodontic treatment that does not involve any in-person visits with a dentist or orthodontist?

3. If a dentist or orthodontist is involved with your treatment, do you know the name of the dentist or orthodontist who will be specifically involved with your case (for example, is it available on the company's website or elsewhere)?

YES

What are his or her education and credentials?

All Candid-affiliated doctors are specialists in the practice of orthodontics, as defined by the American Dental Association. In fact, many of our affiliated orthodontists are Board Certified by the American Board of Orthodontics, the highest level of achievement and honor in the specialty.

In what state is he or she licensed?

All treating orthodontists are licensed in the State in which the patient primarily resides.

In what state does he or she practice?

All treating orthodontists are licensed, thus practice in the State in which the patient primarily resides.

What do other patients being treated by him or her have to say?

As in many online businesses, many of our customers and many of our affiliated orthodontists' patients post reviews.

NO - are you comfortable not being able to research your dentist's or orthodontist's background, credentials, patient reviews, etc. before you begin treatment?

4. Is only one treatment type offered (such as invisible aligners or a certain appliance)?

YES - how do you know that is the best treatment option for you, given your unique situation and oral condition, compared to other treatment models (such as braces)?

The best treatment for each patient is determined by the treating Candid-affiliated orthodontist in conjunction with the patient. This assessment includes factors such as access to care, affordability, comfort, aesthetics, informed consent and last but not least, patient desires.

NO - how is the decision being made for the best treatment model for you, and who is making that decision?

5. How do you know if your teeth and gums are healthy enough for orthodontic treatment?

Using teledentistry, each treating orthodontist screens, diagnoses and refers any patient with signs/symptoms of oral disease for further evaluation prior to initiation of any orthodontic treatment.

Who is making that decision and how is it being determined?

The treating orthodontists.

If the decision maker is a dentist or orthodontist not associated with your treatment, who pays for that assessment?

Not applicable.

6. What are the possible risks (financial, health, etc.) associated with your orthodontic treatment?

As with any orthodontic treatment, there is a wide range of possible risks. This limited treatment approach has correspondingly lower risk. A full refund of the \$95 Impression Kit and assessment fee is available if the patient is not suitable for the limited treatment based on a clinical assessment by the treating affiliated orthodontist. \$1,900 is generally the comprehensive fee for this treatment, including additional aligners when needed, and the first set of retainers.

7. Who can you speak with at the online orthodontic company about your orthodontic treatment?

The patient may speak with the treating orthodontist when necessary.

What is his or her education, background, qualifications and/or experience with orthodontics?

Same answer as above.

8. Who is responsible for detecting any issues that may occur during your orthodontic treatment? As in traditional care, the most important source of information about complication is the patient. In addition, the treating orthodontist and/or his staff regularly check in with patients, and follow up photographs or intraoral scans may be obtained. In addition, the treating orthodontist may require additional follow up using teledentistry best practices.

Is it you? Same as above.

If it is a doctor not associated with your treatment, who pays for those check-ups?

Same as above.

9. If an issue arises during your treatment, how will it be handled and who will be responsible for handling it?

The treating orthodontist.

10. If a doctor is involved with your orthodontic treatment, how can you contact him or her over the course of your treatment?

The patient may contact the treating orthodontist through Candid.

How can you contact him or her if an emergency arises?

Through Candid.

11. If an emergency arises, does the company have a dentist or orthodontist in your area that you can see in-person?

Yes, the treating orthodontist does have dentists or orthodontists available for referral when necessary. However, if there is an emergency, the patient should contact his/her general dentist and/or go to the emergency room. This is the same protocol for patients who go to an orthodontist's physical office.

If not, who would cover the costs associated with seeing a dentist or orthodontist in your area?

Not applicable.

12. If you are injured or have another dispute involving your orthodontic treatment, how is it handled (litigation, arbitration, etc.)?

In the same manner as any other orthodontic treatment.

State dental boards have their own complaint processes for patients who have had issues with orthodontic treatment. Contact information for your state dental board can be found at <https://www.aoinfo.org/aao/state-dental-board-info>.

13. If you are injured or have a dispute involving your orthodontic treatment, what rights do you have against the person or company involved with your orthodontic treatment?

The same rights a patient would have in any other orthodontic treatment.

Are you asked to sign any forms that seek to release them from liability?

No.

14. Does the treatment model comply with the dental laws in your state? **Yes.**

To check your state's dental laws, click <https://www.aoinfo.org/state-laws-and-regulations>
Information for your state dental board can be found at <https://www.aoinfo.org/aao/state-dental-board-info>.

Your Health Care Decisions Are Very Important Personal Decisions.

The AAO is a professional association of orthodontists dedicated to, among other things, "improving the health of the public by promoting quality orthodontic care, the importance of overall oral healthcare, and advocating for the public interest." Your health and well-being are extremely important.

Remember that orthodontic treatment is not a product or device – orthodontic treatment is a professional, medical service. When your care is personally supervised by an orthodontist who is a member of the American Association of Orthodontists, you are assured that your orthodontist spent years in a post-doctoral residency program focused on providing orthodontic treatment to patients.

Before making any decision about orthodontic treatment, consider doing some research and having an in-person consultation with a member of the American Association of Orthodontists. To find an AAO orthodontist near you, simply click here: <https://www.aoinfo.org/>.