

ADA launches public awareness campaign discouraging DIY dentistry

Association runs full-page Wall Street Journal ad

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By Kimber Solana

TO EVERYONE WITH A SMILE,

The members of the American Dental Association have a simple message for you. When you visit an ADA dentist, you can count on our advice and expertise to keep you healthy and smiling.

We care deeply about our patients and will use our clinical training and the latest research to provide you with the highest quality care.

We know it's harder than ever to know who to trust. The ADA believes that ongoing supervision by a dentist is critical for any dental care you receive. Dental diagnoses and treatments are not do-it-yourself projects. We recommend an ADA dentist by your side providing you with the expertise you need and deserve for optimal health.

In between appointments, we're still looking out for you with our ADA Seal of Acceptance. The ADA Seal has been awarded to more than 200 products. When you see it, you'll know that our independent dental experts have found the product to be safe and effective.

We're here for you. We're here to keep you smiling.

Sincerely,
The 161,000 dentists of the American Dental Association

ADA American Dental Association
American Dental Association
findADentist.ADA.org

The Association will run a full-page ad in the Aug. 3 Wall Street Journal encouraging readers to visit an ADA dentist and avoid do-it-yourself, or DIY, dentistry.

The ad is the beginning of an ADA-led public awareness campaign on the potential concerns to patients when using do-it-yourself treatments. These include teeth straightening kits, veneers, bruxing devices and other solutions typically executed under the care of a dentist or specialist.

“We know it’s harder than ever to know who to trust,” the ad says. “The ADA believes that ongoing supervision by a dentist is critical for any dental care you receive. Dental diagnoses and treatments are not do-it-yourself projects.”

The campaign stems from a policy passed by the 2017 ADA House of Delegates that “strongly discourages” the practice of do-it-yourself orthodontics because of the potential risks to patients.

“Public health and safety is our number one concern, and that’s why we are taking steps to educate the public about DIY dentistry,” said Dr. Joseph P. Crowley, ADA president. “Dentists play a role, too, and should talk with their patients about DIY treatments.”

According to the Association, DIY dental treatments can affect the gums, bone, ligaments that support the teeth, or the teeth themselves. Depending on the oral health issue being addressed and the nature of the treatment, there may be risks for long-term issues including jaw problems, abnormal bite, tooth decay and loss, as well as gum disease. If teeth are improperly aligned, gum tissue may be impinged or stripped.

Dr. Crowley, who practiced general dentistry for over 40 years, said he has seen his fair share of do-it-yourself treatment that went wrong. From people moving teeth with rubber bands on their own that resulted in loss of teeth to people bleaching with over-the-counter products in an extreme way that caused irreversible damage to the teeth.

“Despite the apparent cost savings as advertised by these products, they can often cost more in the long run to correct,” Dr. Crowley said.

According to a 2017 survey by the American Association of Orthodontics, about 13 percent of its member orthodontists are seeing patients who have tried do-it-yourself teeth straightening, with some of those attempts causing irreparable damage. AAO attributes the DIY trend primarily to social media, citing YouTube tutorial videos on how to straighten one’s own teeth. The AAO found that 70 percent of DIY patients seen by its members who took part in the study were between the ages of 10 and 34.

The ADA encourages patients to always ask an ADA dentist for his or her opinion before using unconventional dental products. In the Wall Street Journal ad, the ADA encourages readers to look for the ADA Seal of Acceptance, which the Association has awarded to more than 200 products.

“When you see it, you’ll know that our independent dental experts have found the product to be safe and effective,” the ad says. “We’re here for you. We’re here to keep you smiling.”

For dentists interested in sharing do-it-yourself dentistry stories, contact adanews@ada.org.