Invisalign vs. Traditional Braces

A side-by-side comparison for patients

	Invisalign	Traditional Braces
DAILY LIFE		
Appearance	Nearly invisible clear aligners	Visible brackets and wires
Eating	Remove to eat; no food restrictions	Avoid sticky, hard, and chewy foods
Comfort	Smooth clear polymer with small attachments & buttons	Metal braces and wires can cause sores
Tooth Pain	Little to no discomfort	Expected for 1–5 days after each adjustment
Brushing & Flossing	Remove aligners; brush and floss as normal	Harder to clean; different flossing techniques and careful brushing around braces and in between wires
Sports & Music	Rarely interferes with sports or instruments	Mouthguard needed for many sports- braces can cut lips if bumped; longer adaptation period for instruments
ORAL HEALTH		
Teeth & Gums	White spot lesions (scars on teeth) : **1.2%** of patients Gum swelling and gingivitis: **14%** of patients	White spot lesions (scars on teeth): **26%** of patients Gum swelling and gingivitis: **56%** of patients
Breath Odor	None: excellent plaque control, healthy gums, clean appliances	More likely: plaque-retentive sites increase anaerobic bacteria that break down sulfur-containing amino acids
Dental Cleanings	Keep normal schedule (typically every 6 months /2× a year)	Increase to every 4 months (3× a year or more); wires sometimes need removal / replacement for cleanings
Fillings, Crowns, Implants	Aligners easily snap over and hold the teeth	Braces do not stick as well to fillings, crowns, and implants; more likely to come loose and need repair
Periodontal & Root Conditions	Movement can be digitally planned in gentle, incremental stages	Regular braces and wires tend to use heavier initial forces and are less incremental
TREATMENT & VISITS		
Responsibility	Wear **22+ hours** a day	Always working (except when braces or wires are broken)
Scheduling	Mostly short, after-school visits (thanks to digital planning)	More morning/school-hour visits (hands-on adjustments)
Comfort Visits	Rare (**<3%**)	Broken braces, poking wires, and loose appliances occur: **2–5 times** during treatment on average
Progress Visits	About every **10 weeks** or more	Every **4–8 weeks**
Number of Visits	Fewer visits due to longer appointment intervals, fewer broken appliances, efficient digital planning	**3–5 more visits** than Invisalign (adjustments are more frequent + unplanned comfort visits); **8–12 more visits** if wires need removal and replacement for cleanings
Treatment Time	3D digital advanced software planning, less broken items, healthier gums, shortens treatment by **2–3 months** on average vs. braces	Traditional planning, adjustments, repairs, and maintenance