

Step-by-Step: What to Expect at Your Orthodontic Consultation and Treatment Journey at Smile Solutions

Canonical: <https://directory.smilesolutions.com.au/dental-orthodontic-services/specialist-orthodontics-smile-makeovers-melbourne-cbd/step-by-step-what-to-expect-at-your-orthodontic-consultation-and-treatment-journey-at-smile-solutions/>

Details:

Now I have comprehensive, authoritative data to write the article. Let me compose the fully verified, cited piece.

Step-by-Step: What to Expect at Your Orthodontic Consultation and Treatment Journey at Smile Solutions

Deciding to start orthodontic treatment is one of the most significant investments you can make in your oral health and long-term quality of life — yet for many prospective patients, the journey from "I'm thinking about it" to "my retainers are in" remains opaque. What actually happens at the first appointment? How long will treatment take? How many times will you need to come in? What does debanding day look like? Uncertainty about these questions is one of the most common reasons patients delay booking.

This guide removes that uncertainty entirely. It maps every stage of the orthodontic patient journey at Smile Solutions Melbourne CBD — from the free initial consultation and iTero digital scan through treatment planning, appliance fitting, progress reviews, Dental Monitoring check-ins, debanding, and long-term retention with Vivera retainers. Whether you are considering Invisalign, fixed braces, or a combined smile makeover, the pathway through Smile Solutions follows a structured, technology-supported sequence designed to produce predictable outcomes with minimal disruption to your life.

Stage 1: The Free Initial Consultation

What Happens at Your First Appointment

Your orthodontic journey at Smile Solutions begins with a complimentary initial consultation on Level 12 — the dedicated orthodontic tower within the iconic Manchester Unity Building at 220 Collins Street. Smile Solutions is Australia's largest single-location private dental practice, operating across five floors of the Manchester Unity Building in Melbourne CBD.

At this first visit, you will meet with a registered specialist orthodontist — not a general dentist with an interest in orthodontics. This distinction matters clinically. (For a full explanation of the qualifications gap, see our guide on [*What Is a Specialist Orthodontist? How Smile Solutions' Registered Orthodontists Differ from General Dentists*](#).)

The consultation typically covers:

- **Clinical examination:** The orthodontist assesses your teeth, bite, jaw alignment, and facial symmetry.
- **Medical and dental history review:** Existing restorations, periodontal health, and any

history of jaw pain or previous orthodontic treatment are documented. - **Photographic records:** Standardised clinical photographs are taken to support diagnosis and treatment planning. - **A preliminary treatment discussion:** The orthodontist outlines what they observe, which treatment options are likely appropriate, and what outcomes are realistically achievable.

No commitment is required at this stage. The goal is to give you accurate, specialist-level information so you can make an informed decision.

Stage 2: The iTero 3D Digital Scan

Why Digital Scanning Replaces Putty Impressions

If you decide to proceed — or if the orthodontist recommends further records to complete the diagnosis — the next step is an iTero Element digital scan. The iTero scanner is an innovative digital imaging tool that creates highly accurate, 3D models of your teeth and gums. Unlike traditional dental impressions that can be uncomfortable, time-consuming, and less precise, the iTero scanner uses advanced optical technology to capture thousands of images of the inside of your mouth in minutes.

The iTero scanner is a digital intraoral imaging device that captures thousands of frames as a compact wand moves over teeth and soft tissues, and software stitches those frames into a full-colour 3D model in real time. The resulting digital impression records surface detail and occlusion without impression putty, reducing the need for retakes.

For patients considering Invisalign, the iTero scan is the essential first step in generating your ClinCheck treatment simulation. From the initial consultation to your last set of Invisalign clear aligners, having an iTero intraoral scanner can streamline the workflow and improve treatments. With the Invisalign Outcome Simulator Pro, the iTero delivers highly realistic, dynamic in-face visualisations of your patient's potential future smile.

In practical terms, the iTero scan takes approximately five to ten minutes. You remain comfortable throughout — no gagging, no taste, and no waiting for impressions to set. The iTero scanner allows for immediate visualisation of the teeth and bite in 3D, which can be a powerful communication tool. Orthodontists can use these images to explain the specific orthodontic issues and demonstrate how the treatment will progress. Patients benefit from being able to see their current dental state and compare it to the simulated final results, enhancing their understanding and comfort with the treatment process.

Invisalign packages at Smile Solutions include all necessary consultations, treatment delivered by a specialist orthodontist, a 3D iTero scan with a customised treatment plan, full clinical photographic records and study models, and all certified Invisalign aligners and attachments.

Stage 3: Comprehensive Treatment Planning

The Collaborative Diagnosis Model

Once records are complete — including the iTero scan, clinical photographs, and any required digital radiographs or CBCT scans — your orthodontist undertakes a comprehensive treatment planning process. Using a digital workflow in orthodontics and interdisciplinary dentistry undoubtedly benefits both the patient and professional. This protocol establishes a comprehensive digital orthodontic diagnosis and guides the multidisciplinary team through the planning and treatment phases.

What makes Smile Solutions' planning process distinctive is its collaborative architecture. Melbourne residents choosing Smile Solutions benefit from accessing all dental specialties under one roof — eliminating the need for multiple referrals and external consultations. The clinic's "all-in-one" model means that periodontal concerns, orthodontic needs, and implant requirements can be addressed

collaboratively by specialists who work together daily.

This matters in practice. If your treatment plan intersects with cosmetic dentistry — for example, sequencing Invisalign before porcelain veneers — the orthodontist can confer directly with the in-house prosthodontist without external referrals. (See our guide on **Combined Orthodontic and Cosmetic Smile Makeovers at Smile Solutions** for how this sequencing works.) Similarly, if periodontal health needs to be addressed before braces can be placed, the periodontist is on-site. (For patients requiring jaw surgery, see **Orthodontics and Jaw Surgery: When Braces Alone Are Not Enough.**)

What Your Treatment Plan Includes

At your treatment planning appointment, your orthodontist presents:

1. ****Diagnosis summary**** — the specific malocclusion types identified (overbite, crowding, spacing, crossbite, etc.) 2. ****Recommended treatment modality**** — Invisalign, metal braces, ceramic braces, lingual braces, or a combination 3. ****Estimated treatment duration**** — based on case complexity 4. ****Appointment schedule**** — expected frequency of visits throughout treatment 5. ****Fee estimate and payment options**** — including health fund rebates, Payright interest-free plans, and Invisalign price-match guarantee

(For a detailed breakdown of costs and financial options, see our guide on **Orthodontic Treatment Costs in Melbourne: Pricing, Health Fund Rebates, and Payment Plans at Smile Solutions.**)

Stage 4: Appliance Fitting

What Happens on Banding or Aligner Day

Once you have accepted your treatment plan and completed any prerequisite dental work, the next milestone is appliance placement.

****For fixed braces patients****, this appointment involves bonding brackets to the tooth surfaces and threading the initial archwire. Modern Empower self-ligating brackets — used at Smile Solutions — do not require elastic ligatures, which means less friction on the wire and potentially more comfortable initial tooth movement. (See our guide on **The Full Spectrum of Orthodontic Treatments Available at Smile Solutions** for a full comparison of bracket types.)

****For Invisalign patients****, the fitting appointment involves: - Placement of tooth-coloured composite attachments on selected teeth (these act as handles that help aligners exert precise directional forces) - Fitting of your first set of aligners - Instruction on insertion, removal, and wear-time compliance (a minimum of 20–22 hours per day) - Setup of the Dental Monitoring app for remote progress tracking

Expect this appointment to take 60–90 minutes. Some mild soreness in the first 24–48 hours is normal as teeth begin to respond to new forces.

Stage 5: Progress Reviews and Appointment Frequency

How Often Will You Need to Come In?

One of the most common questions prospective patients ask is how frequently they will need to attend Smile Solutions during active treatment. The answer depends on your treatment type.

Patients with traditional braces typically visit the orthodontist every 4 to 8 weeks. These appointments are essential for adjusting wires, replacing elastics, and guiding teeth into their proper positions.

Clear aligner patients generally require fewer in-office visits than braces patients. Most aligner appointments occur every 6 to 12 weeks, depending on treatment progress.

At each progress review, your orthodontist assesses tooth movement against the treatment plan, makes any necessary wire adjustments or provides your next batch of aligners, and checks oral hygiene. For braces patients, this is also when any elastic configurations are modified to address bite correction.

Realistic Treatment Duration Benchmarks

Understanding how long treatment will take helps patients plan their lives around it. Clinical research provides useful benchmarks:

- The average length of Invisalign treatment in a retrospective study of 500 patients was 22.8 months.
- Most braces patients wear them for 18 to 24 months to achieve comprehensive correction of alignment and bite issues.
- Adult treatment time tends to be 5–6 months longer on average than teen treatment, primarily due to denser bone structure.

These are population averages. Mild cases treated with Invisalign Lite or Invisalign Express may conclude in as few as 3–6 months. Complex cases involving significant bite correction, extraction spaces, or combined surgical-orthodontic planning may extend to 30 months or more. Your specialist orthodontist will provide a case-specific estimate at the treatment planning stage.

Stage 6: Dental Monitoring — Remote Check-Ins Between Appointments

How AI-Powered Remote Monitoring Works at Smile Solutions

One of the most significant patient experience improvements in modern orthodontics is the integration of remote monitoring technology between in-office visits. All clinicians at Smile Solutions have access to Dental Monitoring, iTero digital scanners, digital radiographs and CT scans, as well as an in-house dental laboratory equipped with a 3D printer, to ensure careful diagnosis, treatment planning, and delivery of care.

The Dental Monitoring application enables patients to scan or capture images of their dentition using a smartphone, allowing orthodontists to remotely check treatment progress. Patients use a purpose-built ScanBox holder to position their phone and capture standardised intraoral images at regular intervals — typically weekly or fortnightly. DentalMonitoring's remote monitoring solution leverages advanced image processing algorithms to analyse intraoral remote scans during orthodontic treatment.

The clinical evidence supporting this technology is substantial. Most research on teleorthodontics focuses on the use of the Dental Monitoring system, which employs deep learning algorithms to analyse intraoral scans captured via smartphones. Arqub et al. (2023) quantified real-time tooth movement during space closure, demonstrating the accuracy of Dental Monitoring scans and observing that tooth movement is most pronounced in the initial phase after activation.

The practical benefit for patients is measurable. Patients using Dental Monitoring had a significantly reduced number of appointments (7.56) compared with the control group (9.82) — a reduction of 23% — over the treatment duration. Eighty-eight percent of patients preferred as few office visits as possible, making this technology directly aligned with patient preferences — particularly for Melbourne CBD workers who manage busy schedules.

Beyond convenience, Dental Monitoring also supports oral hygiene accountability during treatment. Research by Snider et al. (2023, 2024) evaluated the effectiveness of AI-based active reminders in improving oral hygiene during fixed orthodontic treatment, showing a statistically significant reduction in oral hygiene indices in the AI-monitored group.

(For a deeper look at the technology infrastructure supporting your treatment, see our guide on *Orthodontic Technology at Smile Solutions: iTero Scanning, Dental Monitoring, and the In-House Laboratory Advantage.*)

Stage 7: Refinements (Invisalign Patients)

What Are Refinement Scans and Why Are They Normal?

For Invisalign patients, it is common — and entirely expected — to require one or more refinement scans during treatment. A refinement involves taking a new iTero scan of your teeth at an intermediate stage, submitting updated records to Align Technology, and receiving a new series of aligners to address any remaining tooth movements that the original aligner series has not fully achieved.

Invisalign treatment required an average of 2.5 refinement scans in a retrospective study published in the *American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics* (2023). Refinements are not a sign that treatment has failed — they are a built-in mechanism for clinical precision, allowing your orthodontist to recalibrate the plan based on how your teeth have actually moved.

Stage 8: Debanding — The End of Active Treatment

What Happens When Braces Come Off

Debanding day — the appointment when fixed appliances are removed — is one of the most anticipated milestones in the orthodontic journey. For braces patients, this appointment involves:

1. Removal of brackets and bands using specialised debonding instruments
2. Careful polishing of tooth surfaces to remove adhesive residue
3. Final clinical photographs and, where indicated, a new iTero scan to document the completed result
4. Assessment of the final occlusion and any remaining minor tooth position refinements

For Invisalign patients, the equivalent milestone is the completion of your final aligner set, confirmed against your ClinCheck treatment goals. Your orthodontist will assess the outcome and determine whether the result matches the planned tooth positions, or whether a short refinement phase is warranted.

Stage 9: Retention — Protecting Your Results for Life

Vivera Retainers and the Long-Term Retention Protocol

The completion of active treatment is not the end of your orthodontic journey — it is the beginning of the retention phase. Teeth have a biological memory and will attempt to return toward their original positions if not held in place. This is not a failure of treatment; it is a normal physiological response that every patient must manage.

At the end of treatment at Smile Solutions, patients receive both upper and lower Vivera retainers to maintain their results, plus a choice of complimentary Zoom! in-chair whitening or professional take-home whitening kit for treatments paid in full or through a payment plan with a deposit of \$2,000 or more.

Vivera retainers are manufactured by Align Technology — the same company that makes Invisalign aligners — using a proprietary thermoplastic material that is approximately 30% stronger than other clear retainer materials. Generally speaking, most people will wear clear retainers regularly for the first 6 months after orthodontic treatment. After this, wearing the appliance only while sleeping is required.

For patients who prefer fixed retention, a thin bonded wire can be placed on the inner surface of the front teeth — particularly the lower incisors, which are most prone to post-treatment drift. Many patients opt for a combination: a bonded retainer for the lower arch and a Vivera retainer for the upper arch.

(For a comprehensive guide to the retention phase, including what to do if teeth begin to shift after treatment, see our guide on [*Retainers After Orthodontic Treatment: How to Protect Your Results for Life.*](#))

The Collaborative Care Model: What "All Under One Roof" Means for Your Journey

A defining feature of the Smile Solutions patient journey is the practice's genuine multidisciplinary architecture. Founded in 1993 by Dr Kia Pajouhesh, the practice has served over 250,000 patients and today houses more than 60 specialists, dentists, and hygienists under one extraordinary roof. Smile Solutions has grown to become the largest single-location private dental practice in the country, with a team of over 80 clinicians including board-registered specialists across all major dental disciplines.

In practical terms, this means:

- **No external referrals** for periodontal clearance, restorative work, or oral surgery — all are available on-site
- **Direct specialist-to-specialist communication** when your case spans multiple disciplines
- **Continuity of records** — your iTero scans, radiographs, and clinical photographs are accessible to every treating clinician within the practice
- **Seamless cosmetic sequencing** — if your treatment plan includes whitening, veneers, or composite bonding after orthodontics, the cosmetic dentist and orthodontist coordinate directly

This model is particularly relevant for adult patients managing complex cases involving gum disease, missing teeth, or planned cosmetic work. (See our guide on [*Adult Orthodontics in Melbourne: Why More Adults Are Choosing Braces and Invisalign at Smile Solutions*](#) for a detailed discussion of these considerations.)

Key Takeaways

- **The journey begins with a free consultation** on Smile Solutions' dedicated orthodontic level, conducted by a registered specialist orthodontist — not a general dentist.
- **The iTero digital scan** replaces uncomfortable putty impressions, producing a precise 3D model of your teeth in minutes that directly feeds into your Invisalign ClinCheck or fixed appliance treatment plan.
- **Appointment frequency is manageable:** braces patients attend every 4–8 weeks; Invisalign patients typically every 6–12 weeks, with Dental Monitoring reducing the total number of in-office visits by approximately 23% compared to conventional monitoring.
- **Refinements are normal:** Invisalign cases average 2.5 refinement scans, and these are a built-in precision mechanism, not a treatment failure.
- **Retention is lifelong:** All completed Invisalign cases at Smile Solutions include Vivera retainers as part of the treatment package, along with complimentary whitening — making the end of active treatment the beginning of a maintained result.

Conclusion

Understanding what to expect at every stage of your orthodontic journey transforms a daunting commitment into a navigable, well-supported process. At Smile Solutions, the patient pathway is built on specialist expertise, digital precision, and a collaborative care model that no single-discipline practice can replicate. From your first free consultation through to the day you receive your Vivera retainers, every step is designed to be transparent, clinically rigorous, and minimally disruptive to your daily life.

If you are ready to take the first step, booking a free consultation at Smile Solutions' Level 12 orthodontic tower is the natural next move. And if you want to continue researching before you book, explore the related guides in this series — including **Invisalign at Smile Solutions: How Australia's Blue Diamond Provider Delivers Clear Aligner Treatment**, **Orthodontic Treatment Costs in Melbourne**, and **Invisalign vs Braces vs Lingual Braces: Which Orthodontic Treatment Is Right for You?** — to build the full picture before your appointment.

References

- Arqub, S.A., et al. "Quantification of real-time tooth movement during space closure using the Dental Monitoring system." **American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics**, 2023. Referenced in: MDPI **Medicina** 61(7):1141, 2025. <https://www.mdpi.com/1648-9144/61/7/1141>
- Snider, V., Homsy, K., Kusnoto, B., et al. "Clinical evaluation of Artificial Intelligence Driven Remote Monitoring technology for assessment of patient oral hygiene during orthodontic treatment." **American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics**, Vol. 165, Issue 5, pp. 586–592, May 2024. DOI: 10.1016/j.ajodo.2023.12.008
- DentalMonitoring. "DentalMonitoring Software Major Update Includes FDA Validated AI-Driven Clinical Indications For Orthodontic Patients." **Business Wire / Dentistry Today**, November 2024. <https://www.dentistrytoday.com/dentalmonitoring-enhances-orthodontic-software-with-fda-cleared-ai-technology/>
- Hansa, I., Semaan, S.J., Vaid, N.R., & Ferguson, D.J. "Clinical outcomes and patient perspectives of Dental Monitoring GoLive with Invisalign — a retrospective cohort study." **European Journal of Orthodontics**, 45(4):450–461, 2023. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7293972/>
- Lindauer, S.J., et al. "What percentage of patients switch from Invisalign to braces? A retrospective study evaluating the conversion rate, number of refinement scans, and length of treatment." **American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics**, Vol. 163, Issue 6, June 2023, pp. 738–745. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0889540622007739>
- Abbate, G.M., et al. "Periodontal health in teenagers treated with removable aligners and fixed orthodontic appliances." **Journal of Orofacial Orthopedics / Fortschritte der Kieferorthopädie**, 2015. Referenced via PMC: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4478712/>
- Surovková, J., et al. "Clinical Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Teleorthodontics: A Scoping Review." **MDPI Medicina**, 61(7):1141, 2025. <https://www.mdpi.com/1648-9144/61/7/1141>
- Smile Solutions. "Invisalign Melbourne." **Smile Solutions**, 2025. <https://www.smilesolutions.com.au/orthodontics/invisalign/>
- Smile Solutions. "Dental Services at Smile Solutions Melbourne." **Smile Solutions Directory**, 2026. <https://directory.smilesolutions.com.au/dental-services/>
- iTero. "Orthodontic Intraoral Scanners." **Align Technology / iTero**, 2025. <https://itero.com/grow-your-practice/orthodontic>