

A Guide to your Orthodontic Treatment

To achieve the highest possible standards, orthodontic treatment requires complete patient co-operation. Properly cared for orthodontic appliances do not harm teeth; however patients must have a high standard of oral hygiene and take great care to avoid damage to their braces this is to prevent problems occurring during treatment.

Treatment Times

Most active orthodontic treatment will last for a minimum of 12 months. This time will vary according to individual treatment plans (your Orthodontist can give you an estimate). **However, appliance breakages or missed appointments will increase the treatment time.** Patients must attend on a regular basis, generally during work/school hours to ensure a satisfactory rate of treatment progress. Treatment is followed by a period of retention with a passive appliance to hold the teeth in their new position. This retention period is very important to minimise the risks of any unplanned tooth movements or relapse.

Dietary Habits

Hard and sticky foods damage the braces and bend the wires, thus stopping tooth movement and leading to unscheduled appointments. This will delay treatment completion. Foods high in sugar content and fizzy drinks lead to tooth decay and decalcification (permanent unsightly marks on the teeth). **Care must be taken to avoid these types of food and drink.**

Oral Hygiene

Tooth decay, gum disease and decalcification (permanent unsightly marks on the teeth) may occur if the mouth is not kept clean during treatment. Your teeth will need to be cleaned in the morning and at night and after every meal. Using a fluoride mouthwash during treatment will help maintain healthy teeth. **Poor toothbrushing will result in damage to your teeth and will mean that your braces will have to be removed early, leaving treatment unfinished.**

Problems / Discomfort

It is common for patients to experience tenderness when the brace is fitted or adjusted. Occasionally, patients may suffer from soreness or ulceration of the gums or lips. However, two or three days after fitting the discomfort usually reduces considerably but can take 1-2 weeks to disappear completely. If your brace breaks please contact the practice as soon as possible for advice. This helps to prevent unwanted tooth movement.

Elastic bands

Your Orthodontist may ask you to wear elastics to help tooth movement. Failure to wear these as prescribed will prolong your treatment and may lead to your teeth moving incorrectly.

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Root shortening

The roots of your teeth may shorten very slightly during treatment with fixed appliances i.e. 1-2 mm. This causes no long-term problems. However, rarely it is excessive and treatment may need to be stopped early. A small degree of tooth mobility is normal during treatment.

Loss of tooth vitality

Very occasionally, orthodontic treatment can aggravate nerve damage in a previously damaged or restored tooth. In rare circumstances this may necessitate root canal treatment by your Dentist. This will result in a temporary halt to your treatment.

Jaw Joint Problems

Problems associated with the jaw joint can include jaw pain or clicking, restricted movements or headaches. These may occur during orthodontic treatment, but can also occur if you are not having treatment and are therefore unlikely to be related to the treatment itself. It is possible that pre-existing problems may rarely worsen.

Discontinuation of treatment

Good co-operation will result in your treatment being completed in the shortest time possible. Broken braces, missed appointments and failure to maintain oral hygiene may necessitate the early removal of the appliances.

Failure to comply with any aspect of treatment may result in treatment being stopped before being completed.

Retainers & Relapse

Following completion of treatment, all patients will be expected to wear a retainer appliance and no liability can be accepted if the retainers are not worn as prescribed. Teeth have a tendency to change their positions after orthodontic treatment and this is particularly true of the lower incisor teeth. There is usually only a minor change and this can be minimized by the regular wear of your retainer as instructed by your orthodontist.

Dental Check-ups

You must continue to see the family dentist on a regular basis during Orthodontic treatment.

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