

Retainers

1. What is a retainer?

All patients need to wear retainers after treatment. They can either be removable or fixed to the teeth.

Retainers are designed to keep your teeth straight and it is important that you wear them as instructed.

2. Why is it important that I wear a retainer?

Retainers are just as important as the braces that straightened your teeth. Now that your teeth are straight, if you do not wear your retainer, your teeth are likely to drift back towards their original positions. If this happens it may be very difficult to correct them.

3. How long will I have to wear retainers?

This will vary according to how your teeth looked before the orthodontic treatment started. However, as a general rule you will be asked to wear a removable retainer for a minimum of 12 months. This may mean wearing it all the time at first, then going on to just night-time wear. You will be advised if long-term wear is required.

You should expect your teeth to move a little once you stop wearing your retainers. Changes in the position of your teeth can continue throughout life and are part of the normal ageing process.

The only way to have permanently straight teeth is to wear a retainer on a part-time basis for life.



4. How might a removable retainer affect me?

Your speech will be different at first. Practice speaking with the retainer in place. In this way your speech will return to normal within a couple of days. To begin with you may produce more saliva than normal and have to swallow more than normal. This is quite normal and will quickly pass in a couple of days.



5. *Should I avoid certain foods/drinks?*

Whether you have been instructed to eat with your retaining appliance in or not, you should take care to:

- Avoid sugary snacks/drinks between meals and at bedtime
- Avoid sticky, chewy or hard sweets, mints and sugared chewing gum
- Avoid fizzy drinks (including diet drinks) and large amounts of fruit juice
- Hard or chewy foods can damage your retainer. Avoid them or cut them up first

6. *How might a fixed retainer affect me?*

You will need to take extra care to keep it clean. Your orthodontist will advise you.



7. *What about tooth brushing?*

Take the removable retainer out to clean your teeth. It is important that you brush your teeth well for at least 2 minutes twice a day. Use fluoride toothpaste. If possible, carry a brush with you to use after lunch. You should also gently clean the retainer with a toothbrush and cold water over a sink, taking care not to drop it. To further protect the teeth, use an alcohol-free fluoride mouthwash daily at a different time to when you brush your teeth. Avoid eating or rinsing for 20 minutes after using it.

Sugary snacks/drinks and poor cleaning of your teeth and retainer will lead to permanent damage to your teeth.

8. *Can I remove the retainer?*

Yes if the retainer is a removable type. However, if you have been asked to wear it full-time, then it should only be removed for cleaning. When it is not in your mouth it should be in a protective box. Do not click the retainer in and out with your tongue as this can cause it to break.

9. *How often will I now need to be reviewed?*

You will not need to be seen as often now that the retainers are in place.

Please bring your retainers with you to each visit.

10. *Do I need to see my regular dentist?*

Yes. It is a good idea to visit your dentist regularly now that you are wearing retainers as it will be easier for them to check your teeth for decay.



11. What do I do if I play contact sports?

You should wear a gum shield instead of your brace when you play contact sports. This will also be the case if you take part in activities requiring a protective helmet. Remove the brace for swimming as well. When not in your mouth the brace should be kept in a protective box.

12. What do I do if my retainer breaks or I lose it?

Ring up for an appointment as soon as is reasonably possible. Do not wait for your next routine appointment as the breakage may slow your treatment, or may result in damage to your teeth. If you repeatedly break your brace, your treatment may be stopped early.

REMEMBER

- Brush your teeth for 3 minutes at least twice a day
- Use an alcohol free fluoride mouthwash once every day
- Avoid sugary snacks and drinks between meals and at bedtime
- Avoid fizzy drinks
- Avoid hard, sticky and chewy sweets and foods
- Continue to visit your dentist regularly
- Treatment will usually take 12-30 months
- You will need to wear retainers for some time after your treatment finishes