

## **ABOUT YOUR FIXED APPLIANCE**

### **In the beginning**

In the first few days you will feel your brace to be strange and awkward. The teeth may ache a little during this time (or after the appliance has been adjusted), because they are not used to the pressure of the brace. An aspirin or a paracetamol (whatever you would take for a headache) will make you more comfortable. Although the parts of the appliance are carefully made and assembled, they may rub the lip or cheek, either initially or later, as the teeth move. This may cause a small sore spot or ulcer. Special wax can be obtained from the surgery or most chemists and this is placed over the irritating part to 'hold' the tissues away from harm.

The appliance is carefully assembled in the mouth to straighten the teeth as efficiently as possible. It works by applying a gentle steady pressure to the teeth and is a carefully balanced machine. Any breakage to the brace will unbalance the forces on the teeth and the unattached teeth will start to drift back to their original positions. This will delay the treatment and the brace must be repaired as soon as possible.

You cannot adjust the appliance yourself. Any attempt to interfere with the appliance is likely to damage it. As the teeth straighten, any excess wire will extrude at the back of the appliance. This is normal and is adjusted at every appointment. If the brace is giving problems, please arrange to see your orthodontist as quickly as possible.

The brace is 'glued' to the teeth, but the 'glue' cannot be too strong since we do not want to risk damage to the teeth when the appliance is removed. The appliance can be broken relatively easily, and your jaw muscles are strong enough to do this if you are not careful. You can avoid breakages by taking care when you eat, avoiding sticky foods (like toffee or chewing gum) or hard, crunchy foods (crusty bread, boiled sweets etc). It helps to cut food into small pieces. It is not necessary to live on soup, just be careful!

### **Looking after the brace and your mouth**

The brace must be kept CLEAN. Food, debris and germs will build up around the appliance. If this material is allowed to remain on the brace, it will attack the teeth and damage the gums. If the brace and mouth are not kept clean, you will find that your breath will smell and your gums will become red, swollen and will bleed easily. If this occurs, you MUST be extra thorough with your brushing even though it will make the gums bleed initially. Until the rubbish is removed from around the teeth and gums, the mouth cannot recover. REMEMBER – clean and healthy gums do not bleed.

To clean the brace, you must get your toothbrush into all the nooks and crannies, clean under the wire and between the teeth, at least twice a day. After meals rinse your mouth to remove loose debris. A small headed toothbrush is easier to get into small spaces, but a toothbrush is only as good as the person using it! A mouthwash containing fluoride can strengthen the tooth's enamel, but it is not a substitute for good tooth brushing. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP YOUR TEETH AND BRACE CLEAN.

### **Helping the brace**

Often, auxiliaries are used to help speed up the treatment. These may be headgear, elastic bands or supplementary wires. If they are required, they must be used only as directed. If they are not used properly, only a compromise result will be achieved. If you need headgear or elastics, be sure that you know what to do and when to do it. Make sure you have enough elastics, particularly if you are going away on holiday.

We can only build between 4 and 8 weeks movement into the brace, so regular appointments are vital. Please try to keep your appointments and if you must cancel, please give as much notice as possible. If you cancel with less than 24 hours notice or fail to attend an appointment, this may incur a fee.

### **BEWARE**

If you damage the brace, remember, the brace can damage you!

**IF IN DOUBT, ASK YOUR ORTHODONTIST OR DENTIST**