

ABOUT YOUR RETAINERS

After your brace is removed, we hope you are happy with the appearance of your teeth. You will then be given plastic 'retainers', which are an **important and necessary** part of brace treatment. Retainers can be **removable** (like a plastic brace) or **fixed** (thin wire, glued to the back surfaces of the front teeth). Both require a strong commitment for the patient's side. The removable retainers can be taken out for cleaning but you **must** remember to wear them. A fixed/bonded retainer will require long-term maintenance and associated costs. This will include specialist cleaning from your dentist/hygienist. They can break/come away from your teeth which can result in your teeth moving. If they get distorted by food or e.g. nail biting the wire can be distorted which can move your teeth. There is also a risk of inhalation/ingestion of the wire if not stuck to your teeth.

Why wear retainers?

After the braces are removed, the bone and gums around the roots of the teeth are still 'soft'. Teeth can move out of line within days, if they are not held with a retainer. If you do not wear your retainers as advised, you risk losing the alignment of your teeth, this is called a 'relapse'. If teeth move out of line and your retainers do not fit, then the only way to straighten them again is to repeat orthodontic treatment incurring extra charges. Relapse is disappointing for us both!

How long do I need to wear retainers

You will be asked to wear your retainers night and day for the first 3 months. Then you can reduce it to bedtime only for a further 9 months. We will check your retainers regularly for 12 months then discharge you. You will be advised to continue wearing your retainers in the long-term and **gradually** reduce the wear of your retainers to alternate nights, then 2 nights a week.

To keep your teeth straight in the future, it is important that you continue wearing your retainers at least 1-2 nights a week as long as you wish to keep your teeth straight. If you decide to stop wearing your retainers, your teeth are at risk of moving, even after several years of wearing retainers. The longer you continue to wear them, the longer your teeth are likely to stay straight.

It is normal for the body to grow and change with time. Therefore, teeth also move throughout your life. It is a normal process for the front teeth to become crowded with time, most of which occurs up until 30 years of age. This happens regardless of whether or not you have worn braces. Wisdom teeth are sometimes blamed but there is no guarantee that removal of wisdom teeth will prevent this problem.

What do I do once I have been discharged?

Your retainers need to be checked by your dentist regularly at your check-up appointments to make sure they are fitting well. It is your responsibility to look after your retainers and to seek advice when required. If the retainers are worn out, poor fitting or lost, replacements will be required. After the end of the retention period a charge may be made for the time involved in checking or repairing a retainer.

The only way to keep teeth straight is to wear well fitting retainers forever. Even then, minor tooth movement can occur. It is your responsibility to wear the retainers and look after them in the future.