

RETAINERS

CARE AFTER YOUR BRACES



Now that you have been provided with retainers, you may have some questions. This sheet covers some of the most common things people ask.

Should I wear my retainers all the time?

You will be given advice on when to wear the retainers once your braces come off. You should take the retainers out for brushing, eating and all sports. Remember, if you do leave your retainers out for any reason, store them in the box provided. Pets in particular seem to love retainers, and if they are left out, a furry friend may get hold of them and damage them.

After a while, as discussed, your retainers should be worn at night while sleeping. This should continue for about one year. If you find that the retainers feel very tight when you put them in before bed, you should try wearing them for a little longer, for example, wearing them after your evening meal until you wake up in the morning.

Will I need retainers forever?

This depends on how your teeth looked before your orthodontic treatment. The standard recommendation is for removeable retainers to be worn a couple of nights a week indefinitely. The standard retainer wear regime is outlined in the table in this leaflet. If your retainers feel tight when you put them in, it means the teeth are trying to move back, and you should wear your retainers more often. With retainers, you want to wear them for as long as you want to keep the teeth straight. The British Orthodontic Society recommends that retainers are for life.

What should I expect in the first week?

As soon as the retainers are fitted you will notice an increase in the volume of saliva in your mouth. This is normal. This excess saliva can be swallowed and will resolve within a few days.

Your teeth will feel tender by the end of the first days. Your lips and cheeks may also feel a little tender in the areas that press against the retainer. This is normal and will pass after a few days.

Talking will feel strange to start with and you are encouraged to talk aloud when you initially wear your retainers. This will allow your tongue to adapt, and within a few days your speech will return to normal. While at home say the days of the week to help your speech.

Do I wear my retainers for eating and drinking?

No. Always remove the retainers for eating and drinking, unless you are drinking plain cold water.

How do I clean my retainers?

On removing the retainers you can use a little soap on a separate toothbrush and brush the surfaces of the retainer. Then ensure they are rinsed thoroughly in cold/lukewarm water before you put them back in your mouth. Soak the retainers once a week in a cup of cold water with a few drops of washing-up liquid (or retainer cleaner) for a couple of hours. This will ensure that they stay looking clean and smelling fresh.

Ultrasonic cleaners are available for retainers where the retainers are placed in a bath with washing up liquid or a retainer cleaner. Once the appliance is on it will gently remove any debris on the retainers. They should be left in the bath for 10-15 minutes and then rinsed thoroughly afterwards in cold water.

DO NOT USE HOT WATER AS THIS WILL DAMAGE THE RETAINERS!

Do I clean my teeth any differently?

If you have only removable retainers, no alterations are needed.

If you have a fixed retainer, you will need to concentrate a little more on that area. You will be advised to use interdental brushes and/or super-floss to clean around the fixed retainer. The interdental brushes will be used similarly to how you would clean around your brace where the wire was.

What if I have a fixed retainer?

A fixed or bonded retainer will be affixed to the back of your front teeth. The removable retainer will just fit on top of the fixed retainer. The fixed retainer is an additional measure to ensure that the teeth do not move, as it cannot be removed. It provides some extra peace of mind.

How often will I need to be seen?

We will see you 3-6 months after your braces have been removed. Then again 9-12 months later. Make sure you bring your retainers to each visit.

Should I still see my regular dentist?

Yes. Now that your braces are off, you will want to get a thorough scale of your teeth with the hygienist. A check-up is also recommended once your braces have been removed.

What should I do if something happens to the retainers?

If the retainers break or distort, or if you lose them, you should contact the practice as soon as possible. This will allow new retainers to be made. You should not wait until your next routine appointment.

If your fixed retainer breaks, please call us and make an appointment as soon as possible. Please wear your removable retainer full time until your appointment. This will protect the wire from breaking and the teeth from moving. Please note that replacement retainers and repairs will carry charges.

Retainer timelines

Time since braces removed	How often retainer should be worn	Other instructions
3-5 days	Full time	Remove for eating, drinking (anything but water) and cleaning.
0-12 months	At night only	Remove as above and wear at least 10 hours per day. Increase to 12 hours if starts to get tight.
12-18 months	5 nights per week	As you start to reduce the wear, if the retainers feel too tight, wear them more often.
18-24 months	3-4 nights per week	
2-3 years	3 nights per week	
3 years or more	2 nights per week (indefinitely)	