

RETAINERS: Wear and Care

Your new retainers have been made and here are a few important instructions:

Put them in one at the time. Place the retainer over your teeth and push it into place with your fingers. It should snap into place over the teeth and may be tight at first. Do not "bite" it into place as this may damage your retainer. If the retainers will not go completely onto the teeth or are hurting your teeth or gums we will need to make new ones for you. Please call the office for an appointment immediately.

Wear your retainers day and night. Only remove them when eating or brushing your teeth. Continue this routine of full time wear until the doctor gives you other instructions. If you do not wear your retainers properly, your teeth may shift or move out of place. If you lose or damage a retainer, call the office immediately. There will be a charge to replace a lost or damaged retainer.

Clean your retainers every day by brushing them with toothpaste, a mild soap, or denture cleaner. Do not use hot water or the retainer may soften and change its shape. After a cold or sore throat, be sure to disinfect your retainers by soaking them in a solution of 1 tablespoon of bleach in ½ pint water. Rinse them thoroughly after soaking.

Keep your retainers away from pets and be sure to bring them with you to each appointment. A good effort on your part will help maintain a healthy smile for years to come!

RETAINERS: How Long?

The short answer to this question... is indefinitely. There are two considerations to this issue. When teeth are moved into new positions, the soft and hard tissues surrounding the teeth must be allowed adequate time to remodel (reform) around the teeth. This may require from one to two years. If the teeth are not held in position during this time, the teeth may be pulled out of position by the tissues, which have stretched during the straightening process. This is called orthodontic relapse and can occur very rapidly.

After this period of remodeling of the tissues, there are other factors, which can affect the position of the teeth. Even people who have not had braces can experience shifting or movement of their teeth as they age. If you have had braces, you want your teeth to stay as straight as possible so you may require some minimal retention even beyond the time necessary to prevent orthodontic relapse.

Factors such as; developing wisdom teeth, continued jaw growth, changes in the muscles of the face and mouth, changes in the supporting bone and gum tissue, gritting of the teeth, nail biting, thumb sucking, and tongue habits all can affect the stability of the teeth.

We strongly recommend a combination of fixed (glued in) and removable retainers to preserve your beautiful smile. We recommend that you wear your removable retainer day and night except when eating or brushing for the first twelve weeks. After that, most people can reduce their retainer wear to 8-10 hours per day (nighttime wear). From that point on, a reducing schedule will be used until a minimum amount is established to maintain your teeth in their straight position. It is not uncommon for patients to leave the bonded retainers in place for ten years or more.

Not many investments can last a lifetime like straightening your teeth. With a little effort, your new smile can last a lifetime!