

Orthodontic treatment



If you are thinking of having orthodontic treatment you may have some questions you would like answered first.

What is orthodontic treatment?

Orthodontic treatment usually involves the wearing of braces (removable or fixed) often the extraction of teeth, and very occasionally jaw surgery.

Why might I need orthodontic treatment?

There are 3 main reasons for having

orthodontic treatment:

To improve the appearance of the teeth and face.

- To improve the health of the teeth and gums.
- To improve function i.e. to make it easier to eat.

The pictures below show the teeth of a patient before and after orthodontic treatment:



Before treatment



After treatment

What types of braces are there?

There are those which can be removed for cleaning, known as removable braces, an example of which can be seen below.



A removable brace

The second type of brace is fixed to the teeth and cannot be removed for cleaning. An example of a fixed brace can be seen in the following picture:



A fixed brace

When will the brace be fitted?

This depends very much on the teeth being present in the mouth and the stage of growth of the face and jaws.

How long will treatment take?

Treatment with braces usually takes between 6 - 24 months to complete. If teeth need to be extracted who will do this? Your own dentist usually does this.

Is it painful?

Having the brace fitted is not painful. However, it is common to have slightly tender teeth for 3 - 5 days after each fitting and adjustment appointment.

How often will I need an appointment?

Once your brace has been fitted you will need frequent and regular appointments for it to be adjusted.

Will the brace affect what I can eat?

In order to prevent damage to both your teeth and brace, you will need to avoid the following:

- Toffees, boiled sweets, sugared chewing gum, chocolate bars, etc.
- Fizzy drinks including diet drinks, excessive amounts of fruit juice.
- Hard foods which might damage the brace such as crunchy apples, crusty bread, etc.

Hard foods can be eaten with care if you cut them up first.

Will orthodontic treatment damage my teeth?

It is important you brush your teeth well, three times per day and use a fluoride toothpaste. A fluoride mouthrinse should also be used last thing at night, after toothbrushing, to further protect the teeth. Failure to keep your teeth and brace clean will lead to permanent scarring of your teeth as shown in the picture below.



Having orthodontic treatment to improve the appearance of the teeth will be pointless if such scarring is allowed to occur. Further information can be given to you about other rare complications.

Will I still need to see my regular dentist?

Yes. It will be important you still have check-ups with your regular dentist throughout orthodontic treatment so that your teeth can be checked for decay.

Will I still be able to play contact sports?

Yes, but it is recommended you wear a gumshield when doing so. This will also be the case if you enjoy riding a bicycle, roller-skating, or skateboarding. You will be advised about this.

What if I play a musical instrument?

If you play a wind instrument, particularly the flute or a brass instrument, then a fixed brace may make it more difficult. You will need to discuss this with your music teacher.

What if my brace breaks during treatment?

You will need to contact the practice for an emergency appointment for the brace to be repaired. Repeated breakages will slow down the treatment and increase the overall treatment time. As a rule, every time the brace is broken 1-2 months is added on to the normal treatment time of 6 - 24 months. If you repeatedly break the brace, treatment may be stopped, leaving your teeth in a worse position than when you started.

What happens at the end of treatment?

Your teeth will try to return to their original positions. In order to prevent this you will be fitted with retaining appliances. These may be worn full time at first and eventually worn part-time.

How successful is orthodontic treatment?

This very much depends on your commitment to the treatment. As a general rule, patients who co-operate well with treatment get good results, whilst those who do not co-operate well, get poor results. Unless retainers are worn in the longer term some settling and growth changes may occur after treatment.

If you have any further questions that you feel you would like to ask, then please write them down and bring them with you to your next appointment. It is important you fully understand what is involved in having orthodontic treatment before you decide to go ahead.

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