

☀ What Will Be Expected of You During Orthodontic Treatment?

Your Cooperation is Essential

Generally speaking, excellent orthodontic treatment results are attained with cooperative, informed and committed patients and parents. Successful treatment is a team effort: patients, parents, the orthodontist and a specially trained staff working together. The rewards? Your radiant smile, your healthy teeth, and your glow of new self-confidence!

For a most pleasing result in the shortest period of time and at the lowest cost you must:

1. Keep regularly scheduled appointments and be on time. Your orthodontic team will make every effort to be on time for you.
2. Practice and achieve effective oral hygiene.
3. Wear your elastics and retainers and all other auxiliary appliances as instructed.
4. Call the office should you experience loose braces or broken appliances and auxiliaries. Do not wait until your next appointment to do so. Additional time may be needed to repair your appliances.
5. Eat a well-balanced diet.
6. Avoid chewing on hard, crunchy or sticky foods, ice, and other objects that may damage the appliances.
7. Follow all other instructions provided by the orthodontist and orthodontic staff. Instructions are often based on many years of education and proven experience.

A failure to follow instructions may require your orthodontist to change the procedures and goals of your treatment. As a last resort, treatment may have to be discontinued. Discontinuation of treatment may lead to problems involving teeth, gums, jaw joints, or severe relapse of tooth positions. This may be worse than no treatment at all. Cooperation throughout treatment is your best way to achieve a pleasing smile and a good bite. Please remember that following directions and recommendations are your responsibility. Your orthodontist will encourage you, but cannot assume responsibility for making sure you follow directions.

Habits

Uncorrected finger or thumb habits as well as atypical swallowing may cause treatment to be extended longer than anticipated. Uncontrolled muscle habits may also cause undesirable tooth shifting following treatment. Grinding and/or clenching the teeth may promote or aggravate jaw problems (TMD) and may increase the tendency for teeth to shift. If significant, undesirable shifting of teeth occurs (relapse), and then retreatment may become necessary along with a new treatment fee.

Cavities and Decalcification

Orthodontic fixed appliances (braces) do not cause cavities or decalcification (white or brown tooth scars). Braces do trap food particles and plaque and increase your likelihood of developing cavities or decalcification if you do not effectively clean your teeth. Most patients are able to prevent these problems with a combination of proper diet, effective tooth brushing habits and regular checkups with the family dentist. You should brush your teeth immediately after eating, using the proper techniques for brushing with braces. If brushing right away is not possible, vigorously rinsing with several mouthfuls of water is helpful. Floss once a day. Effective oral hygiene and plaque removal is essential. Remember to avoid sticky candies and foods and minimize beverages high in sugar and limit snacks.

Check for loose bands or brackets daily. If any part of your orthodontic appliance becomes loose, call the office to schedule an appointment. A loose band or bracket greatly increases your chance of getting cavities. When you miss appointments and are not seen regularly by your orthodontist, loose bands can go undetected and may result in tooth and/or gum problems.

Swollen Gums and Periodontal Problems

Ineffective tooth brushing and flossing may cause your gum tissue to become sore and swollen. The swelling may cause your gums to contact your orthodontic appliances leading to even more soreness. Should this condition become severe, swelling may lead to receding gums and gradual loss of supporting bone around your teeth.

If severe gum or periodontal problems occur during orthodontic treatment, and if not controlled or corrected, it may be difficult or impossible to control bone loss and subsequent loss of teeth. Consultation and treatment by a periodontist, a dentist who specializes in treating gum disease, will be advised. If periodontal problems cannot be controlled, treatment may be discontinued.

Gum recession can be common in adult malocclusions (improper bite). Aligning your teeth may leave triangular spaces between the front teeth, contributing to esthetic problems and entrapment of food particles. Most often, these spaces can be reduced or eliminated by slightly narrowing the wider portion of the teeth and closing the spaces by bringing the teeth closer together. Other procedures by your general dentist specialist may be appropriate for providing the best esthetic result.

Tooth Reshaping and Equilibration

Occasionally, your orthodontist may recommend removal of small amounts of enamel tooth structure either between or on top of your teeth to allow for proper alignment, improved dental esthetics, or to improve the fit and function of your teeth. Additionally, your orthodontist may recommend adjustment, tooth reshaping, or equilibration of one or more chewing surfaces of your teeth to allow a better fit and function of your teeth in their new positions. This removal of tooth structure does not endanger the long-term health of your teeth or gums. Your orthodontist will explain these procedures in more detail should it apply to you.