

Orthodontic Department

Patient Information

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Information

If you need this information in large print, easy read, on audiotape or in another language please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail pals@dchft.nhs.uk

If you wish to obtain a list of the sources used to develop this information leaflet please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail patient.info@dchft.nhs.uk

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Now that you have your braces

What are my responsibilities?

Congratulations, you have now had your braces fitted and have taken the first steps to a better smile.

The first few days with a new brace can be difficult.

Please read through this leaflet and keep it safe as it contains information which you might need later on.

Your orthodontist will work hard to straighten your teeth, but without your help you will not get the best possible smile

Your responsibilities are to:

- clean your teeth
- be careful about what you eat
- attend all your appointments
- take care of your brace
- let us know if your brace breaks
- keep attending your dentist for check ups
- keep us up to date on any changes of your address, phone number, dentist or doctor

What will it be like at the beginning?

Should it be hurting?

- Your brace will probably start to make your teeth ache this evening
- The pain is at its worst at bedtime and when you first wake up tomorrow morning
- This is normal, as the teeth are starting to move

How long will it hurt for?

- The pain usually lasts for 2-3 days
- It will hurt again (although not as bad as it is now) when you have the braces tightened again

What can I do to make it hurt less?

- Painkillers will make things better
- Our research project has shown that Ibuprofen is the best painkiller
- Remember to follow the instructions on the packet including taking this painkiller with food
- Some people who have asthma should avoid ibuprofen
- You can take paracetamol or any other painkiller which you would take for a headache
- Some people choose to take both ibuprofen and paracetamol in the first few days
- It is best to avoid hard foods for the first few days as biting can make the pain worse

What can I do if it is rubbing?

- We have given you some wax to use
- The wax does not actually stick to the brace so you have to mould it around the brace
- It tends to come off when you are eating
- Don't worry if you swallow it – it won't do you any harm

How do I clean my brace?

What toothbrush is best?

- Electric (not battery) toothbrushes are slightly better than normal toothbrushes
- Your toothbrush should have a small head and medium bristles
- You should also use an 'interspace' toothbrush which has a single tuft (we sell these at our reception desk)

How often should I clean?

- It is best to clean your teeth each time you have something to eat
- This means cutting down on snacks between meals
- You may wish to buy a travel toothbrush so that you can clean at lunchtimes
- You should use your 'interspace' toothbrush at least twice a day

Should I use mouthwash?

- Yes - It is a good idea to use a mouthwash with fluoride in it once a day
- The best time to use it is last thing at night
- A mouthwash is better than nothing if you cannot clean your teeth after a meal

Should I use disclosing tablets?

- Disclosing tablets help you to check that your cleaning is up to standard
- You should use them once a week or more frequently if we ask you to

Can I get more advice about cleaning?

- Our Oral Health Educator and Hygienist are available for advice
- Let us know if you would like to see one of them

What can I eat?

Are there any foods I should avoid?

- Certain foods can damage your brace
- These include toffees which can stick to the brace
- Also avoid biting into foods with your front teeth e.g. apples, crusty rolls or the crusts of pizzas
- You should break or cut these foods into small pieces and chew them on your back teeth

What about sweet things?

- Eating sweet foods increases your chance of getting white or brown marks on the teeth (demineralisation)
- These marks will ruin your smile
- It is not only the total amount of sugar that you eat that counts. It is also the type of food that contains the sugar, for example sticky foods will cling to the teeth and the sugar will stay in the mouth for longer
- Also the amount of times per day that you eat sugary foods is important i.e. eating mints all day is worse for your teeth than having an occasional chocolate bar

Which foods contain sugars?

- The most obvious ones are sweets, biscuits and chocolate
- But many other foods also contain sugar (described as 'hidden sugars')
- Good examples of these include breakfast cereals and tomato ketchup
- You should read the label on all foods to avoid these 'hidden sugars'
- Also watch out for dried fruit, like raisins or sultanas

What about drinks?

- Many drinks also contain sugar e.g. a bottle of Ribena contains 90 teaspoons of sugar
- The worse culprit is fizzy pop
- Not only does this contain sugar, but also acids which dissolve the teeth
- Even 'diet' drinks are damaging as they still contain acids
- Fruit juices are also acidic but are not quite so harmful
- You should drink fruit juices in moderation and it is best to dilute them with water
- You should not add sugar to tea or coffee

Does this mean I can't have sugar at all?

- To cut all sugar from your diet is very difficult
- You can have sugary foods or drinks as a treat, once in a while
- If you are going to have chocolate or sweets, have them after a meal and eat them all at once rather than over a period of time
- Then clean your teeth soon after
- However, if you drink fizzy pop do not clean your teeth straightaway, wait at least 20 minutes (the acids soften the tooth surface and brushing then removes the softened enamel)

Should I still visit my dentist?

- It is important that you keep visiting your dentists for regular checkups whilst your braces are on
- If you change your dentist then please let us know

What happens if I miss an appointment?

- If you miss an appointment we will try to rebook you as soon as possible
- Because our clinics are busy this usually takes a few weeks
- This may extend your brace treatment
- If you miss more than one appointment you will receive a letter which will be copied to your dentist
- It is **your** responsibility to get in touch with us, otherwise you will be discharged and you will only be seen again if your dentist writes to us

What happens if my brace breaks?

How can I make it more comfortable?

- You can use your wax to make the brace comfortable

Who should I phone?

- Please phone our receptionist if your brace has broken
- The numbers and our opening times are on the back page
- At busy times, or out of hours, you can leave a message on our answer machine

How urgent is it?

- Unless the broken brace is digging in and hurting, most repairs can wait for a few days
- However, we would much rather see you to repair it before your next routine appointment

What should I do if I am on holiday?

- Always take your wax with you when you go away
- It is very rare to need the brace to be repaired by another orthodontist
- If it is very uncomfortable then sometimes an emergency dentist can help get you out of pain
- Otherwise contact us as soon as you get home

How can I stop it breaking again?

- Avoid hard foods
- Avoid biting your finger nails
- Avoid chewing pens
- Avoid using your teeth as tools e.g. opening the tops of sports bottle tops

Where can I get more advice?

- If you have any questions then you can talk to our Hygienist or Oral Health Educator
- Your orthodontist can answer any questions you have
- We also have a computer in our waiting area with lots of information on braces

Gumshields

- We recommend that you wear a gumshield for any sport or activity where you may get hit in the mouth such as rugby and hockey
- A gumshield that can be softened in hot water and moulded to your teeth should be adequate
- You may need to buy a slightly bigger size to fit around the brace
- If you play a lot of sport you may wish to try one of our custom made gumshields which can be adapted to fit around the teeth and brace but still allow them to move. These cost between £30 and £35
- Ask your Orthodontist if you would like one and we will arrange to take a mould of your teeth

Further information

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Opening Times:

Monday - Friday 9.00am – 1.00pm
 2.00pm – 5.00pm