

Orthodontic Department Patient Information

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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

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Publication Date: 04/16
Review Date: 04/19

What is it like to have a functional brace?

Most of our patients have questions that need to be answered before they agree to go ahead with a functional brace. I hope that most of those questions will be answered in this leaflet, but if you have any other questions please ask your orthodontist.

Why do I need one?

Your orthodontist has noticed that your bottom jaw is slightly smaller than your top jaw. This often causes a gap between your top and bottom teeth (an increased overjet). The aim of treatment with a functional brace is to improve your lower jaw position and your bite. Once your jaw is in a better position it is easier to fully correct your bite with fixed braces.

What do they look like?



Functional braces are removable braces that clip in and out. Your orthodontist can show you one on a model. Usually there will be two separate braces, one which clips onto the top teeth and one which clips onto the bottom teeth (very occasionally these two parts are joined together). Some plastic blocks between the top and bottom braces make you bite in a forward position.

How will it feel when I am wearing it?



To get an idea of how they will feel, bite the tips of your front teeth together. You will feel a stretch of the muscles of your lower jaw. You will notice that your back teeth do not contact each other – the plastic blocks of the brace will fill this gap. Functional braces feel strange to begin with. There is a lot of plastic in your mouth which takes a bit of getting used to. You will feel like you have lots of saliva in your mouth and you may also talk a bit strangely for a few days (see below). We have found that the first two days are when it feels most strange and uncomfortable. If you manage to keep them in for these first two days you get used to the brace and it will not feel so strange anymore.

Will the functional brace affect my speech?

Your speech will be affected but usually it gets better within the first two days. To speed up the process we advise you to practice talking with the brace in by reading out loud to yourself from a book or magazine.

When do I have to wear them?

You need to wear your functional brace both during the day and overnight. You should take it out to eat and to clean your teeth. Also you should remove your brace to play sports e.g. rugby or hockey but it is important that you put a gumshield in instead.

How will I clean them?

Your functional brace should be cleaned with a toothbrush and toothpaste. It is also a good idea to soak your brace in 'Retainer Brite' once or twice a week. We sell 'Retainer Brite' at our reception desk.

How will I know it is working?

Your orthodontist will measure the gap between your top and bottom teeth each time you come in. This will give us a measurement of progress with the brace. Many people find that their back teeth don't fit together very well after a while; this is perfectly normal and will be corrected later in treatment.

How long will I wear it for?

You will wear your functional brace for approximately nine-12 months.

What if I don't think I could wear one?

It is best to be honest if you feel you won't be able to wear a functional brace. They are custom made to your mouth and therefore a lot of effort and money is invested in making one for you. Your orthodontist will let you know if there are any other options - for example taking out teeth and just using fixed braces. Other options are unlikely to give as good a result.

Do they always work?

If you wear your functional brace well it is usually very effective. If you have stopped growing it may not work, therefore your orthodontist will measure if you are still growing. For those who are no longer growing, their jaw position can be corrected with jaw surgery when they are older.

If you do not wear it for enough hours per day then your bite may not be fully improved. We can sometimes take out teeth to compensate for this or you may have to accept teeth which stick out.

Further information

Orthodontic Department telephone number: 01305 255174