

Why wear a retainer?

It is important to wear retainers to hold your teeth where they are now that you have had your braces removed. The teeth are not directly attached to the bone; there is a small ligament that anchors the tooth to the bones. Like other ligaments, it has some elasticity and tends to want to return to its original position, especially immediately following treatment. Your teeth have forces on them every day, whether it is when you chew, when you grind your teeth, or even the force placed on them from your lips and cheeks. These forces all tend to make your teeth move, making it important to wear your retainer almost forever in order to prevent them from shifting.

When do I wear the retainer?

For the first three months, your retainer should be worn 24 hours a day, except when you eat, play sports, or brush your teeth. After three months, you may wear your retainer only at night, but you must wear it every night. We will see you again in 6 months to check the fit of your retainer and to check your teeth.

When you take your retainer out, we recommend that you store it in the case that we provide for you. Be careful to put the retainers in a case when you take them out – it can be very easy to wrap them in a napkin and throw them away. Also keep them away from pets (dogs love to eat them for some reason). There is a \$150 charge to make a new retainer if it has been lost or broken.

How do I clean my retainer?

You should clean your retainer once or twice a day. We recommend holding them in your hand and scrubbing them with a toothbrush under the faucet. You should not use toothpaste because it tends to get stuck in the retainers, but hand soap is OK to use. Do not soak them in any chemicals (bleach, mouthwash, etc.), but feel free to freshen them up with some mouthwash. Never use hot water or any other chemicals to clean them, they can be damaged easily.

You will continue to be seen over the next couple years for retainer checks. Be sure to bring your retainers with you so your orthodontist can make sure they still fit well. Keep track of them, it costs \$150 each to replace lost or broken retainers! If you should break or lose a retainer, call the office so we can schedule you to come back in and we can make you a new one. Do not wait until your next appointment, your teeth may already have shifted in that time. Please call us if you have any questions, any problems, or if you feel like your retainer isn't fitting properly.

CONGRATULATIONS!