



Orthodontic treatment: what you need to know

Information for patients from the Oral and Maxillofacial Department

Before agreeing to orthodontic treatment please read the following carefully. If there is anything you do not understand please ask a member of staff.

- Orthodontic treatment on average lasts between 18 and 24 months, sometimes longer if you need more complex treatment.
- Fixed appliances (metal braces) are normally used to move teeth through bone. Before these are fitted you may be asked to wear removable braces (functional appliances) to improve your bite.
- Following active treatment retainers are needed. Retainers are meant to be worn for the rest of your life, as teeth will always want to move back to their original crooked position.
- You may be asked to wear a brace called headgear, which you will need to wear at home and in bed. It is important to wear headgear as instructed by your orthodontist, to avoid injury. You should bring it with you to every orthodontist appointment.
- Should your headgear become loose you should stop wearing it and make an appointment with your orthodontist.
- In order for your treatment to go well and for you to get the best results you need to wear your brace/headgear/retainer for the time instructed by your orthodontist, otherwise your treatment may be extended or even stopped.

Will I still need to attend regular appointments with my dentist?

Yes. We will look after your braces during treatment but you will also need to see your dentist during orthodontic treatment for regular check ups. If you need to have teeth taken out for treatment we will ask your dentist to do this.



What are the risks to orthodontic treatment?

- **Damage to your teeth if your brushing is not good enough**

For patients who do not clean their teeth and gums properly, damage to the enamel around the fixed appliance can happen. The result is a permanent brown or white stain, or even decay. It is advisable to avoid any acidic drinks (such as orange juice or fizzy drinks). It is very important to use fluoride mouthwash. How clean your teeth are will be monitored throughout your treatment and if cleaning does not remain at a safe level then treatment will be stopped early in order to prevent permanent damage to your teeth and gums.

- **Damage to your teeth if lots of sugary snacks are eaten**

If you eat lots of sweets and drink a lot of fizzy drinks during treatment you will mark your teeth. You will be given advice by the hospital about what foods to avoid when wearing your brace.

- **Teeth becoming crowded again after treatment**

Whether teeth remain straight after treatment with braces varies from one person to the other and is difficult to predict. In particular, the crookedness of the lower front teeth does get worse, in most cases after all braces are removed – this is natural growth. You will, therefore, have to wear retainers for as long as you want your teeth to stay straight.

We will not be able to offer repeat treatment if you have not used the appliances as instructed by your orthodontist.

- **Increase in the time wearing braces, if appointments are missed**

If you do not keep your appointments we will have to increase your total treatment time. It is your responsibility to make regular appointments for appliance adjustments. Repeated failed appointments will result in the stopping of your treatment early to avoid damage to your teeth and their supporting structures.

- **Increase in the time wearing braces, if your brace is repeatedly broken**

If your brace is repeatedly broken because you do not take care of them, treatment time will be extended. Therefore, in the case of repeated breakages, treatment will be stopped early to avoid damage to your teeth and their supporting structures.

- **Shortening of your teeth roots**

Whenever we move teeth with braces there is always some shortening of the roots. Usually this is by a very small amount but in some people this can result in your teeth having very short roots after treatment. This is more likely if you have knocked your teeth before, if roots are very pointy, if you have worn braces before, or if your teeth have to be moved a long way.

There is also increased risk when braces are worn for a long time, due to failure to keep appointments and breakages. In these cases treatment may have to be stopped early to stop permanent damage to your teeth.

- **Lost appliance**

If you lose your appliance it will increase treatment time and may not even work. If appliances/ retainers are lost due to carelessness you may be charged for the replacement.

Are there alternatives to treatment?

Your orthodontist will discuss the alternatives with you and help you decide on the best treatment for you. One alternative would be to accept how your teeth look and not have braces. If you cannot keep your teeth clean enough for braces this will be the only option.

Useful information

- Whilst we try our best to make appointments as convenient as possible, appointments cannot always be booked out of school hours.
- In order to deliver the most efficient treatment, patients may be seen by more than one clinician over the course of their treatment.
- Remember the outcome of your treatment totally depends on your co-operation with the instructions given to you by your orthodontist, therefore please tell us if you have any concerns or questions.

Orthodontic treatment is a big commitment for patients and parents, and can be a lot of hassle, so you need to be fully committed before you start treatment.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patientinformation