

Patient information on braces

This information is for patients – and for parents of young patients – who are about to start a course of orthodontic treatment. Information enclosed highlights what to expect during and after treatment and how to look after your brace. It indicates the potential time frame and what you as a patient may need to do during treatment.

Types of braces

1. Fixed appliances - These may be known to you as train track braces. The braces are attached to the front surface of the teeth using a dental glue and cannot be removed by the patient.
2. Removable braces - These can be removed by the patient. They are made of a special plastic and have wire attachments. You may be asked to wear 1 or 2 of these depending on your treatment needs.
3. After braces you will be given retainers these are essential and if they are not worn your teeth will move back towards their original position.

Before orthodontic treatment

Before deciding if you need braces your orthodontist will check your teeth and take dental records. These normally consist of: radiographs (x-rays), impressions (moulds of your teeth) and photographs. Not all patients assessed for braces will be offered braces under the NHS. This will depend on your treatment need (how your teeth bite together and are positioned) and is not means tested. For further information, please see www.bos.org.uk

If you do not qualify for NHS orthodontic treatment, but would still like to have your teeth straightened you may want to consider private treatment and this can be discussed with your orthodontist.

Important points to be remembered if you have braces

1. You must have excellent toothbrushing
2. You must ensure that the sugar content of your diet is low
3. At Embrace orthodontics we recommend that no fizzy drinks, sports drinks or energy drinks are taken while wearing braces
4. You must wear a mouth guard for all contact sports
5. You must attend your dentist every 6 months for your check ups and any necessary dental treatment.

Reasons for discontinuation of treatment

1. Your oral hygiene/toothbrushing is not good enough
2. Your sugar content is too high and decay is noted
3. You have too many breakages and treatment progression is affected
4. You fail to attend your appointments on a regular basis.

Potential risks with braces

1. **Tooth decay** – this will occur if your oral hygiene/toothbrushing is not excellent and/or your diet contains too much sugar. The decay will be noticeable on the front surfaces of your teeth and will initially show up as white/brown spots, these marks are permanent and may progress to cavities ("holes"). If this occurs, we may have to remove your braces early. Braces that are removed early due to poor tooth brushing or poor diet will not be replaced under the NHS
2. **Gum disease** – will occur if your oral hygiene/toothbrushing is not excellent. You may notice bleeding on brushing, swollen and red gums and in some more serious cases may experience pain. Good tooth brushing will prevent this. If you have any concerns regarding your gums or teeth contact your dentist or orthodontist
3. **Discomfort during treatment** - Orthodontic treatment uses appliances (braces) to move the teeth with gentle pressure. When braces are placed, or when adjustments are made, your teeth and gums may feel tender initially. The amount of discomfort varies from patient to patient, but

usually does not last for more than two or three days. Painkillers may be used to relieve this discomfort - your orthodontist will give you further information

4. **Root shortening (root resorption)** - As the teeth are moved with braces, the roots of your teeth may shorten by a small amount, usually 1-2 mm. This is normal and acceptable for the function of your teeth. However, in a small number of cases more shortening will occur and this tends to be in patients who have certain risk factors at the start of treatment. Your orthodontist will advise you of this. If this affects you, your treatment may take longer than usual as progression must be slow to protect the teeth or you may want to accept a compromised treatment plan that puts less pressure on the teeth. In extreme circumstances you may experience loss of a tooth because of root resorption
5. **Tooth wear** - As your teeth are moved the top and bottom teeth may rub against each other or the brace. In some cases, this may cause wear of the edges of the teeth. If you notice this contact your orthodontist. This is more common if your braces are ceramic (white) or you have an acidic diet (carbonated drinks, high fruit content, etc)
6. **Nerve damage** - On rare occasions, teeth that have been previously traumatised, have large fillings, or gum problems, may experience tooth discolouration and/or nerve damage during orthodontic treatment. In such cases, root canal treatment might be necessary to maintain the health of a tooth. Whitening may also be recommended to restore a more natural tooth colour
7. **Injuries from braces** - There is always some risk of injury in the use of braces. Loose or broken wires and bands can scratch or irritate your cheeks, gums or lips. Soft dental wax can be used to cover problem areas like this, your orthodontist will show you how to use it and it is available to buy at the front desk. Dislodged or broken braces can be swallowed or inhaled. The risk of dislodging your braces is increased when sticky or crunchy foods are eaten. Your orthodontist will give further advice on this. If problems persist you can call for advice or an appointment. An out-of-hours phone service (02892 679 060) is available if you experience acute pain - this service is only available for severe problems. Although your orthodontist will use great care in applying and removing your braces and other bonded attachments, damage may occur to teeth previously weakened by cracks in the enamel, undetected cavities or weak fillings
8. **Jaw Joint Pain and/or Clicking** - Occasionally patients may experience pain, tenderness, clicking or locking of the jaw joint. These problems may occur with or without braces and are more common at exam times and other stressful periods in your life. If you experience any of these symptoms and are concerned, please do not hesitate to discuss them with your orthodontist
9. **Black triangles** - As the teeth move the gum margin does not always follow. This may appear as a dark area at the base of the tooth and is described as a black triangle. These can sometimes be camouflaged by reshaping the tooth, but often it is not possible to remove them entirely.

Elastics

Your treatment may include elastics. Follow instructions carefully to achieve good results and avoid injury. Not following instructions regarding wear could result in increased treatment time and/or a less than ideal end result.

Removal of Teeth

Teeth may need to be extracted as part of the orthodontic treatment. Your orthodontist will recommend removal only if it improves your prospects of successful treatment. Missing teeth, on the other hand, can make treatment more difficult. In such cases, treatment compromises may be necessary and an ideal result may be impossible to achieve.

Retainers

Retainers are an essential part of your orthodontic treatment. After removal of your brace you will be supplied with retainers. If retainers are not worn as instructed, then your teeth may move back towards their original position. The NHS will supply only one set of retainers, replacement of lost or broken retainer will incur a charge.