

FAQs to consider and how to care for your brace

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You have now had your brace work fitted. The next 48 hours maybe a little strange for you but most of the uncomfortable feeling and any short term discomforts are likely to be resolved within a couple of weeks.

What is it going to feel like?

Your teeth may feel very big and you may want feel like you are actively holding your lips out. This is because the lips are used to sitting against the smooth surface of your teeth and it will take sometime for them to get used to sitting against the brackets.

You may experience an increased in salivation during the first 24 hours as your body gets used to having the brace in the mouth.

What shall I do if I feel pain?

Usually there is no initial discomfort from the teeth themselves but within 48 hours' time the teeth may start to feel tender or ache a little. This can be managed with the use of soft foods to help minimise pressure on the teeth and using low level painkillers similar to those used for a headache such as paracetamol. Please ensure that you do not exceed the maximum dosage and ensure that you are not allergic to the medication being taken.

If you feel sharp shooting pain that does not resolve after a few minutes or throbbing pain that keeps you up at night this is rare and you should contact your general dentist to investigate this further.

My brace is rubbing or pinching my lips what should I do?

If you feel that the brace is rubbing or pinching in any area in particular after leaving the practice then the wax supplied can be used as shown to you on the model or presentation. It works best if the area it is being placed on is dry thus you can try to dry the area with a cutip (cotton bud). The wax won't last for long and is likely to fall off or be swallowed and is unlikely to cause any harm to you in this case. 'Comfort brace' and 'iglü' are other products that can be used to prevent ulcers and work quite well and the latter can be used on ulcers themselves. If the area where the lips are catching persists and cannot be managed with wax or such products then make an appointment to be reviewed by myself. Most of these products can be purchased from amazon or boots or your local chemist.

What if I get an ulcer?

Ulcers are quite common within the first few weeks of having the brace fitted. This is as your lips get used to the feeling of the brace and toughen up to the brackets. If an ulcer were to occur the best thing to resolve them is warm salty mouthwashes (teaspoon of salt in warm water not too hot as it may scald you) gently rinse with this around the area of the ulcer and spit out.

What can I eat?

The best way to avoid breaking the brace is by controlling your diet and chopping up large items into small pieces that can be pushed to the back of the mouth and chewed with your back teeth. Avoid anything hard or sticky; initially, if it can't be mashed with a fork it is likely to be too hard to eat. Keep sugar and sweet items to mealtimes and cut fizzy drinks out of the diet altogether as these can cause white/brown marks or stains to build up on the teeth, which can be permanent.

People often start with soft foods such as soups, pasta, noodles, porridge etc.

Foods that often break the brace and should be avoided at all times are toast, crusty bread, pizza crusts, whole apples/carrots, cookies, hard chocolate, meat on the bone, hard crisps such as doritos.

Cleaning the brace

Now that the brace has been fitted you must pay particular attention to cleaning your teeth and the brace as it will become harder to do so, since the brace will trap food around the teeth. Brushing is recommended after every meal (if attending school a pack containing a toothbrush and interdental brushes should be taken to school). Brush with your normal toothbrush on the tops, sides and inside surfaces of the teeth. Pay particular attention to the area near the gums to avoid plaque building up and gum disease. If you notice bleeding in any areas mention this to your general dentist but it is likely that it is your body telling you that you need to concentrate on this area more closely whilst cleaning. If the bleeding still persists after two weeks of good cleaning then make an appointment with your general dentist to investigate it further.

Be sure to use the interdental brushes to clean underneath the wire between the teeth as your normal toothbrush is unable to get to these areas and it is often where food will get stuck. After brushing use a spit no rinse approach. Just spit the excess toothpaste out and do NOT rinse with any mouthwash or water.

Should I use a mouthwash?

Normal mouthwashes are not usually recommended as part of dental care unless advised by your general dentist or hygienist and if used should be used at a different time to brushing.

If you are out and about and find it hard to find somewhere to brush your teeth then you should take a bottle of fluoride alcohol free mouthwash with you and this should be used to swirl your mouth out. Brush your teeth at the earliest opportunity once you can do so.

If buying Fluoride mouthwash just ensure that it is alcohol free and contains at least 550ppm Fluoride or represented as 0.05% NaF. This can be found on the back of the bottle.

What do I do if my brace breaks?

Breaking the brace where either one of the squares comes off or the wire snaps is quite common during the early stages of brace treatment as you get used to what works for you in terms of diet and what doesn't. If you have had teeth removed as part of your treatment then the starting wires across this space can be prone to breaking in the initial stages. If this happens make an appointment with the practice to be seen for a repair. If there are more than three breakages in a row despite having given advice on how to avoid breakages it maybe suggested that we stop treatment as it is unable to progress in a timely manner and keeping the brace on longer than necessary may result in otherwise avoidable damage to your teeth.

The wire is poking out into my cheek what should I do?

Initially as the teeth straighten out the wire may extend out at the back, this is normal. If it starts to pinch the cheek or catch your tongue then you can either use the wax provided on this sharp area whilst you wait for your next appointment. Or if there is a sufficient amount poking out and you feel comfortable to do so you or your parent or another adult can trim the excess part with nail clippers. There are videos on how to do this on www.bos.org "Patients' Advice" section and "Patients' Home Videos Repairs".

What should I do if I play a contact sport?

If you play a contact sport it is best if you use a mouthguard in order to protect your brace. These can be purchased from either amazon or sports shops. Brands that have been used previously are Shock Doctor or Total Gard. These come with a universal fit either small medium or large and allow for teeth to move. You will be told which size is likely to fit you.

What if I play a musical instrument?

It is important to discuss the type and frequency of the instrument you play and at what level with me (your orthodontist). Do also discuss it with your music teacher if you are thinking of undertaking treatment. Those that have an important grade exam or scholarship soon often decide to delay the treatment, which in most cases is perfectly acceptable to do so. Unless a growing brace (functional brace) is recommended as part of treatment, for which timely treatment is most important. However this is usually a removable brace that can be removed for practice.

Most novice wind instrument players will quickly adapt to wearing a brace and be able to continue to play their musical instrument. With lots of practice and determination you will be able to cope very well within a few months of starting treatment.

Most wind instrument players will adjust very quickly to having a brace fitted. What you may experience as part of playing is a dry mouth and it is important to take frequent breaks and drink plenty of plain water.

Brass instrument players may struggle to achieve certain notes when the brace is first fitted however this will adjust and improve with time and plenty of practice. Since the mouthpiece of your brass instrument often pressed against your lips you may find it particularly sore when your brace is first fitted. You could either use the wax provided in your pack or 'comfort brace', which comes as strips that can be placed over your whole brace one strip for the top and one for the bottom. Alternatively you could ask your music teacher if a larger mouthpiece could be used to help spread the load and pressure of your lips against the brace.

Most instrument players adapt very well with having a brace but do discuss any concerns that you may have with me as it may influence the time of your treatment and also the type of brace or aligner that may work well for you.

Will I have to wear elastics?

As part of your treatment I may ask you to wear elastics between your teeth in order to help get the teeth in the correct position. If asked to do so please follow the instructions as not wearing elastics as prescribed could result in prolonged treatment, spaces not closing or teeth moving in an undesired way.

I hope that you find the above information useful and I would be happy to answer any further questions you may have when I review next time.

In the meantime there is more information and helpful videos that you may find useful on the following website;

www.bos.org

(British Orthodontic Society)

Go to "Patients' Advice" section
and then "Patients' Home Videos Repairs"