



# 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 lasts on average between 18 and 24 months. It can sometimes be longer, if you need more complex treatment.
- Fixed appliances (metal braces) are normally used to move teeth through bone. Before they fit these, your orthodontist may ask you 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.
- Your orthodontist may ask you 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.
- If your headgear becomes loose, stop wearing it and make an appointment with your orthodontist.
- In order for you to get the best results, you need to wear your brace / headgear / retainer for the time instructed by your orthodontist. If not, your treatment may be extended or even stopped.

## Will I still need to have regular appointments with my dentist?

Yes. We will look after your braces during treatment. However, 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**

If you do not clean your 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. Avoid any acidic drinks, such as orange juice or fizzy drinks. It is very important to use fluoride mouthwash. We will check how clean your teeth are throughout your treatment. If cleaning does not remain at a safe level, we will stop treatment early to prevent permanent damage to your teeth and gums.

- **Damage to your teeth if you eat lots of sugary snacks**

If you eat lots of sweets and drink a lot of fizzy drinks during treatment you will mark your teeth. The hospital will give you advice 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 this happens after all braces are removed, and is natural growth. You will 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 you miss your appointments**

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 your treatment stopping early.

- **Increase in the time wearing braces, if you repeatedly break your brace**

If your brace is repeatedly broken because you do not take care of them, we will extend your treatment time. In the case of repeated breakages, we will stop treatment 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. 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 moved a long way.

There is also increased risk if you wear braces for a long time, due to failure to keep appointments and breakages. In these cases, we may need to stop treatment 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 you lose appliances / retainers due to carelessness, we may charge you for the replacement.

### Are there alternatives to treatment?

Your orthodontist will discuss the alternatives with you. They will 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

- We try our best to make appointments as convenient as possible. However, we cannot always make appointments out of school hours.
- To deliver the most efficient treatment, you may see more than one clinician over the course of your treatment.
- The outcome of your treatment depends on you following the instructions given to you by your orthodontist. 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. You need to be fully committed before you start treatment.**

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.**

**Please let us know:**

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

**You can let us know this by:**

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments**, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email ([ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)).

**Patients should not bring 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 has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient information leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

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