

# All About Retainers

## Information for patients

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Now that you have had your braces removed, you have the smile that you have always wanted.

You will need to wear retainers to allow the teeth to settle into their new positions. Some are removable, like the ones shown below:



**Hawley retainer**



**Essix (clear) retainer**

At first, the retainers will feel a little tight, but this feeling will disappear after a day or two. If you are having problems, get back in contact with us.

Others retainers are fixed and are stuck onto the teeth like this:



**Bonded retainers**

These make cleaning and flossing your teeth more difficult and there is more risk of plaque accumulating – this may result in tooth decay or gum disease.

You need to have these checked more frequently. We only prescribe bonded (fixed) retainers for a very small number of patients as they can cause problems if not carefully monitored.

## Should I wear my retainers when eating?

The thin clear plastic retainers (essix retainers) should be removed during eating and drinking.

If you have an appliance with wires and clips on it (Hawley retainers), you can leave it in for eating if you wish but you always clean it afterwards with a toothbrush and soapy water (avoid toothpaste).

## How long should I wear my retainers?

We advise patients to wear their retainers EVERY night initially. After this, we suggest you wear your retainers **at night for as long as you want your teeth to remain straight.** The reason for this is because it has been found that teeth can move after treatment.

Why this occurs is unknown: it is a common problem and has often been blamed on erupting wisdom teeth, but some people without wisdom teeth also have lower front teeth crowding.

Wearing your retainers on a long-term basis at night will prevent the teeth moving.

## Can I reduce my retainer wear?

Unfortunately you can't reduce your retainer wear.

The only way to keep your teeth nice and straight would be to wear your retainer every night for the rest of your life.

We will monitor your retainers for up to 6 months after debond. After this we will discharge you to your general dentist with the request for them to monitor and replace your retainers. Looked after, retainers should last you for 1-2 years. If you need a new retainer from your dentist, there is a charge involved.

### A few dos and don'ts:

**Do remember to clean your retainer after meals.** Clean it well with a toothbrush and some soapy water (avoid toothpaste as this tends to scratch the surface).

**Do remember to see your own general (family) dentist on a regular basis** during your orthodontic treatment. We may see cavities in your teeth but we cannot fill them – your dentist will do this.

**Do take your retainer out for sports and keep it safe** in the little protective box that we will give you.

**Do remember to bring your retainers in** with you each time you attend.

**Don't use very hot or boiling water** to clean your retainer – it may distort the plastic and may not fit your teeth afterwards.

**Don't wrap it in tissue paper** - it may be mistaken for rubbish and get thrown away!

**Don't leave your retainer where cats or dogs can damage it.**

**Don't keep the retainer in your pocket or loose in rucksacks, bags** etc – it will be damaged and may not fit your teeth afterwards.

