

Retainer protocol

A retainer is a device designed to keep your teeth in their straightened position after orthodontic treatment or to prevent further crowding or shifting of teeth. Retainers are made from clear plastic, acrylic, or wires that fit snugly over or behind the teeth. Their primary purpose is to minimize the natural tendency of teeth to revert to their original positions over time.

Everyone undergoing orthodontic treatment should utilize a retainer as the final step in their smile journey. You've worked hard to achieve that incredible smile, and retainers keep your teeth straight and minimize relapse.

Besides keeping the teeth straight, retainers are crucial for supporting the bone around your teeth as they adapt to their new positions. Our bodies and teeth naturally change over time. By wearing a retainer, you're proactively minimizing the changes in the correction you've achieved.

These retainers are worn full-time for 3 -4 months (approximately 18 hours per day). If you notice the retainers are tight upon putting them in prior to bedtime then you need to increase your daytime hours . After 3-4 months they can be worn only at night for a year, and then a minimum of two-to-four nights a week indefinitely.

If you become inconsistent in wearing the retainers, teeth can shift in a very short period of time—sometimes within a week or two.

By wearing retainers as prescribed, you can ensure the longevity of your orthodontic results, keeping your smile straight and beautiful.

Best Practices for Retainer Care

When not properly cared for, your retainer may deteriorate, change shape, or get lost. If this happens, contact us right away, as a malformed or missing retainer will hinder the success of your treatment.

1. Always Use a Retainer Case

No matter where you go, always bring your retainer case. When your removable retainer is not in your mouth, put it in its case right away to avoid losing it. Beyond misplacing your retainer, there are a few other essential reasons to use a case:

- Dropping your retainer into a pocket or purse could damage the device, requiring a new mold or scan.
- Using a napkin as a replacement case is risky, as it's very easy to throw it away accidentally. You don't want to go dumpster diving for your retainer!
- Leaving your retainer out in the open makes it accessible to your pets, and dogs love to chew retainers.
- Even when in a case, avoid heat; your retainer can become damaged if it's left on a heater, a hot stove, or in a hot car.
- Please note IT IS SAFE to use professional strength tooth whitening gel dispensed from our office in your retainer. It will not degrade the retainer. Please discuss with one of our doctors or hygienists.

2. Keep Your Retainer Clean

In order to keep your retainers looking clean and clear, please rinse them every time you remove them, and brush/wash them with soap and water daily. You may also use an effervescent cleanser to ensure all residue is removed from the retainer.



If you have a permanent retainer, you can brush and floss as normal to maintain retainer cleanliness and oral hygiene. If you find it difficult to brush your retainer, you can use interproximal brushes to reach the nooks and crannies.

3. Be Mindful of Food and Drink

If you have removable retainers, they should be removed before you eat, as some foods or drinks may stain or stick to the device, increasing the risk of gum disease and tooth decay.

If you have an Essix retainer (the clear kind) please avoid drinking liquids (except water) when the retainers are in place. Liquids can seep into the retainer, holding the liquid against the teeth until the retainer is removed. Liquids with color (coffee, tea, red wine, etc.) can stain teeth, and those with sugar or acids, such as soft drinks, can cause tooth decay.

The Success of Your Treatment is Up to You

Keeping your smile healthy and beautiful is in your hands. By maintaining home hygiene, visiting us every 6 months for routine hygiene appointments. At this time, we will inspect your retainers for proper fit and integrity. We will also clean your retainers in the ultrasonic for you. Wearing your retainers as prescribed will preserve the great results that came from your orthodontic treatment.

If at any time you have a question or concern about your retainers or teeth alignment, please contact our office. 978-468-4411