

Retention

Warning

Teeth move throughout life and the rate of natural tooth movement slows down as we get older, however teeth will never remain in exactly the same position. Do not have an orthodontic treatment without accepting a commitment to long term retention i.e. holding the teeth with retainers in their new position following treatment.

How much change will occur once retention is stopped?

As soon as you stop wearing retainers your teeth will move, they may not go back to where they started but they will not remain in the corrected position.

Why do teeth move?

Teeth rest in a position of balance between the different forces applied to them. These forces come from the face, mouth including the lips, tongue, biting forces, swallowing, gum elasticity etc. It is the balance of these forces that will determine where the teeth land up. As the balance of forces change throughout life so the teeth move.

Risk factors encouraging relapse

Not wearing your retainers, poor mouth care leading to gum disease and tooth loss, hormonal changes, smoking, drugs, excess alcohol and some medical conditions.

How often do I wear the retainers?

The fixed retainer is worn all the time. It is permanent and becomes part of the mouth.

Removable retainers are normally worn full time to begin with and then gradually reduced to night time wear. Each patient varies but often after a year or so the removable retainer can be worn less frequently at night. But the more you wear the retainers the better the chance of keeping your beautiful result.

Who will look after the retainers?

It will be your responsibility to look after the retainers and to ask your dentist to do repairs/replacements.

Retainer Types

1. The **fixed retainer** (gold braid or multi flex stainless steel or glass fiber) is stuck to the inner surface of the front teeth and cannot be seen. If it breaks or comes detached it will need urgent replacement. Good cleaning and occasional maintenance is essential.
2. Removable retainers called “Essix” (1) “**see through**” clear type, though attractive, they are fairly weak, harbour bacteria and do not offer a long term answer. They will need replacing from time to time. (2) Acrylic and stainless steel commonly called “**Hawleys**” are stronger than the clear retainers but are fairly bulky and will require replacing from time to time. They will also harbour bacteria and deteriorate with time.
3. **Cast Chrome cobalt** – a relatively new retainer type which are long lasting, robust, easy to clean but more expensive to make than the other retainers.

