

## General information: Starting Orthodontic Treatment

Usually approximately one hour appointment is required. Braces consist of:

- Brackets** A bracket is adhered to each tooth. Each bracket has a groove that runs through it. The brackets can be made of stainless steel, ceramic or gold.
- Archwire** A thin wire runs through the groove in the brackets and into a tube or band on the molar tooth. These wires are changed periodically throughout the treatment.
- Ligatures/O-rings** Tiny rubber bands go around each bracket to hold the archwire in place. These come in many different colours, in which you can choose at every adjustment appointments/visit.

### Will it be painful?

After your braces are fitted, your teeth may be slightly sore for 3-5 days. If necessary, take painkillers such as Panadol/Paracetamol (please read the instructions on the packet). Also, the inside of the lips and cheeks may be irritated by your new braces. Use the wax provided to help prevent the braces from rubbing your lips/cheeks.

### Can I eat normally?

Everyone is different, as some have a stronger bite than others. You have to take extra care in cutting up food in small bite sizes and chewing slowly. In order for your orthodontic treatment to work well and in the shortest possible time, it is important you take care of your teeth and braces. In order to prevent damage to both, you should:

- Avoid eating sticky toffees, boiled sweets, sugared chewing gum, chocolate bars, etc.
- Avoid fizzy drinks (including diet drinks) and excessive amounts of fruit juice.
- Take care eating hard foods which might damage the brace such as crunchy apples, crusty bread, raw carrots, etc. Cut them up first.

### What about toothbrushing?

It is important you brush your teeth well, at least two times per day and use a fluoride toothpaste. If possible, carry a toothbrush with you for use after lunch. Pay particular attention to brush where the gums meet the teeth. Brushing may take a little longer when you have fixed braces. **Failure to keep your teeth clean will lead to permanent scarring of your teeth.** You will be given a starter kit - Oral Hygiene Pack when you have your braces placed. You will be shown brushing techniques as well as how to use the products in the starter kit.



### **How long will treatment take?**

It varies greatly, depending on how severe your case is. Active treatment time can range from 12 – 24 months but for severe cases, it may be longer than that. You will need to come in every 4 – 6 weeks to have your braces adjusted. Failed and cancelled appointments or repeated breakages of the braces will add to the overall treatment time.

### **Will I need to wear anything in addition to the braces?**

At some stage during the treatment, it may be necessary for you to wear elastics or other removable/fixed appliances. Elastics are worn inside the mouth either full time or night time only. You will be instructed by your orthodontist.

### **What happens after my braces come off?**

Once the active phase of your treatment has finished, it will be necessary to wear retainers. The retainers may be removable and/or fixed behind your front teeth. The length of time this has to be worn can vary. To minimise the risk of teeth moving, the retainers should be worn for as long as you want to keep straight teeth.

### **Do I still need to see my regular dentist?**

Yes. It is important you still have check-ups with your regular dentist throughout orthodontic treatment to ensure that your teeth and gums are healthy.

### **Why do I need teeth taken out?**

The decision of teeth removal/extractions is not taken lightly, and this judgment is skillfully and carefully made on a case by case basis. Majority of the cases are treated without taking teeth out. However, removal of teeth is sometimes necessary to relieve crowding by keeping the roots of the teeth within the bone, to correct the overbite/overjet, to improve symmetry and/or pleasing balance of facial profile etc.

### **What do I do if I play contact sports?**

It is recommended you wear a mouthguard. You will need to re-mould several boil and bite type of mouthguards, as your teeth are actively moving with the braces.

### **What if I play a musical instrument?**

If you play a wind instrument, then you may require several months to get used to the braces, before you can play normally again. Use wax to mould over the braces, to prevent them pushing against the lips/cheeks.

### **What do I do if my brace breaks?**

Occasionally, a bracket will become loose or a wire will break. If you are concerned about your braces, please contact us as soon as possible. Explain to us what has happened and we will be able to advise you whether it is urgent for you to be seen. However, if you repeatedly break your braces, treatment time will be increased and there is a possibility that treatment may have to be stopped prematurely.

