West Cobb
ORTHODONTICS

Congrats! You've got aligners, now what?

You just got aligners, but your first question probably is when will you be finished?
If you follow these rules, I promise you will be done faster than if you don't.
Here are a few guidelines to help you keep your teeth and aligners in good shape:

1. How often to wear your aligners

- You should wear your aligners for approximately **21 hours** a day.
- This means you wear them all night while you are sleeping and all day during the day, except when eating/drinking.
- Aligners only work if you wear them as instructed. Tooth movement is all about time, and unfortunately anything less than 21 hours of wear will mean that your teeth will not move as much as we want. This can extend your treatment and time and may mean we need to switch to braces if you are non-compliant.
- You should switch sets anywhere from every **7-10 days** . We will usually start with wearing the first set for 10 days and then for all other trays after that do 7 day (weekly) changes. If you are wearing each set for 10 or more days, you could be delaying your treatment.
- Aligners work *best* with **attachments.** These are the tooth colored filling material "bumps" on your teeth. They are temporary and will come off when we finish treatment. We keep them as minimal as possible, but without them we will not be able to achieve the result that you want. Some teeth and movements need an attachment to move at all. Aligners with no attachments is like driving your car with your elbows, it's probably not going to get you to your destination.

2. Keep your teeth & aligners clean

Did you know your mouth is home to BILLIONS of bacteria? They live on your teeth, tongue, and gums in the form of plaque. These bacteria eat what you eat , and they LOVE sugar! They get rid of their waste in the form of acid, which is very abrasive to your teeth, and this acid is what causes cavities! So what can you do to avoid cavities? BRUSH & FLOSS YOUR TEETH REGULARLY! This is really the only thing that will stop it.

- You should Brush your teeth after every meal, at least **three times per day**: morning, noon, and night.
- Brush for **2 minutes** every time. Do **not** rinse your mouth with water after brushing.
- Spend extra time brushing your along your **gums**, because this is where the plaque is!
- We recommend an **electric toothbrush** that has a built in timer.
- Make sure any toothbrush you use has **soft bristles** that won't hurt your gums.
- Floss **once** a day. I recommend floss picks because they are easier to use.
- **Waterpiks** are great for cleaning your teeth, and we definitely recommend getting one if you can.
- **Mouthwash** is a great addition to brushing and flossing but it can NOT replace it. You still have to brush and floss.
- Did you know? Aligners can contribute to cavities, staining, and erosion of your teeth if you do not keep your teeth and aligners clean. They can also cause problems if you drink or eat anything wearing your aligners.
- The composite attachments can **stain** if you drink a lot of coffee, red wine, or eat dark colored foods like spaghetti sauce or curry. You should rinse your mouth with water after eating/drinking these things to minimize staining.
- **Brush** the inside and outside of your aligners in the morning and at night with a toothbrush under running room temperature/cold water. You can also buy **aligner cleaner** products from most major stores or Amazon.

3. Do not eat or drink while wearing the aligners

- You can drink plain **water** while wearing the aligners, but that's it. Sparkling or flavored water is still not good, as it is acidic and sometimes has added sugar.

- Take your aligners out right before you eat, and put them in your **case**.
- It is best to **brush your teeth** after you eat and before you put your trays back in. However, if you do not have access to a toothbrush, at least rinse your mouth with water first before wear. I would rather you wear your trays than leave them out because you're waiting to brush your teeth.
- Do not leave the aligners in a **hot** car, or put them in hot water as it can distort the plastic.

4. Keep your appointments

- We will see you every **6-10 weeks**. It depends on how many trays we gave you and how long you wear each set.
- It is important that you see us regularly and do **NOT miss** appointments, as you can delay treatment by not going through your tray sets quickly.
- **Bring** the aligners you are currently wearing with you to your appointment, if you don't we won't be able to tell how things are going and you may have to come back for us to check.
- Give us at least **24 hours notice** if you need to reschedule, otherwise we will charge you a no-show fee. When you miss an appointment without telling us, that is a spot that another patient could have had.
- Be **on time**! We usually have a good deal of things we need to get done in an appointment, and if you miss any of that time, we may have to put of doing things until your next visit. This can result in added treatment time as well.

5. If you have discomfort

- We recommend taking **Advil** (ibuprofen) or **Tylenol** (acetaminophen) as directed on the box as needed.
- You should only experience mild discomfort when you first switch to a new tray set. If you do not wear your aligners as we instruct, your teeth could stay sore for much longer than they should. It seems counter-intuitive, but if your teeth are sore when you put in your trays, you need to leave them in so that your teeth can get used to it.
- If the edge of the aligner is **rubbing** your gums or cheek: You may smooth out the edge of the aligner with a nail file (emery board). Or you can call us and come in so we can see what is going on.

6. If you have a problem

- If you **lose a set** of aligners: you can usually skip ahead to the next tray, and wear it for a few more days than you normally would.
- If you have a **button** (that you wear elastics to) or an **attachment come off**: please call us and come in on our next available appointment to have it reattached. You should be careful to not eat any hard/sticky foods like crackers, caramels, or ice as foods like these can break off your attachments or buttons. (Think of it like what foods you would limit if you had braces).
- We have great assistants who are on call should you have any problems or emergencies. You may text our appointment line at **(229) 264-4919** with a brief summary or photo of what's going on**.**

7. Next steps

- What we are giving you today is just our first batch of aligners. This isn't the total amount of trays that you will have over the course of treatment.
- Once you finish this first batch of trays, we will re-scan you and order a "**refinement**" batch of aligners. We will also do a refinement if your trays are not fitting properly for any reason, including lack of compliance, dental work, or teeth not moving as they should.
- When we do a refinement sometimes we **replace the attachments** that we put on the teeth, so we will remove the old ones, and place new ones. This is to make sure that the teeth are moving properly as each attachment serves a different purpose.
- Once we re-scan you, it usually takes about **4-5 weeks** for the new set of aligners to come in. We will call you and let you know once they are in so we can make an appointment. During this waiting period, we will instruct you to keep wearing your last set until they come in. Or, if you are not finished with all your trays, we may have you proceed normally through your sets until you finish out your batch.

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