West Cobb
ORTHODONTICS

Retainer Instructions

Congrats on getting your appliances off! We aren't quite done with you yet, as we are now beginning the next stage of your treatment: the retention phase. This part is just as important as the treatment phase, because your teeth are desperate to move back into the position they were in before we started treatment. Teeth start to **immediately move back** when you take your retainer out, so the longer you go without your retainer the more the teeth will move. Think of retainers as anti-aging devices. If you wear them as instructed, they will keep your teeth in the same place as the day we stopped treatment!

Remember that orthodontic treatment is not a "cure" for crooked teeth. Just because you have had your teeth straightened, there is no guarantee that they are going to stay straight without good retainer wear.
Orthodontics is an investment. You spent a lot of money on treatment and now you need to protect your investment!

How long do I wear them?

Wear retainers full time (**20 hours a day**) for 2-3 months- until we see you again
then nighttime only (at least **8 hours**) for lifetime.

What are the rules?

1. When it's not in your **FACE**, it's in the **CASE**. Always carry your case with you and every time you take them out, you should put them in your case. The #1 reason people lose their retainers is by wrapping them in a napkin or paper towel to eat and then throwing them away, so NEVER wrap your retainers in a napkin.

2. If your teeth are **SORE**, you need to wear your retainers **MORE**. Your teeth will be sore/hurt when you put in your retainers if you have not worn them enough. If this happens, wear the retainers full time (22 hours) all day the next day, and then you should be able to go back to nighttime only wear.

3. You have to wear retainers at **NIGHTTIME** for **LIFETIME**. No matter how many years it's been since you had treatment your teeth will want to shift, starting with the day you get your braces off. THEY WILL MOVE. We just don't know how much. Some people's teeth want to shift more than others, so we may have to adjust how much you wear them each day to fit you. And yes, lifetime means even 50 years from now you still need a retainer.

Those are the most important, but here are more:

4. Keep retainers away from **pets**. Retainers are just a very expensive chew toy to your pet! Keep them in your case and up on a counter or in a drawer.

5. Retainers, like shoes or tires, will need to be **replaced** every so often. You can extend your retainers lifespan by caring for them properly. Some people go through retainers faster if they grind their teeth at nighttime. We recommend replacing retainers if you have a crack that has progressed all the way to the edge of the tooth or cracked completely in two. Or if you have worn a hole through the retainer itself from grinding. If this happens, still wear your retainers like normal (yes, even if it's in two pieces) and call/come in ASAP to have a new one made. If you wait longer than a week without a properly fitting retainer, your teeth could have shifted.

6. Do not leave your retainer/case in **hot** places or wash them in hot water as they can melt and deform.

7. Do not eat any foods or drink anything other than **water** while wearing your retainers. This can stain or ruin your retainers as well as potentially hurt your teeth.

8. Taking your retainers in and out roughly can result in cracking or **breaking of the retainers**. Only take them out from the back and take them out from both sides at the same time. Taking them off from only one side at a time can twist the retainer and cause it to crack. Never bite the retainer into place, as this can also cause cracking. Use finger pressure only to seat them. Be careful to not scrape your gums with your nail taking them out as this can cause gum damage.

9. **Clean** your retainers after you take them out- you can use water and a separate soft bristle toothbrush. Do not use toothpaste to clean (it will cloud your retainers). If needed dawn dish soap or denture cleaner can be used. Or you can purchase specific retainer/clear aligner cleaners off Amazon or in drugstores. Hold your retainer gently and do not squeeze the sides when cleaning or breakage/cracking can occur.

10. We try in every retainer at delivery and **confirm the fit** before we send you home. So, the reason that your retainer doesn't fit anymore is because YOU LET YOUR TEETH MOVE by NOT WEARING your retainer as instructed. In that case we will need to remake a retainer(s) for you for a fee. If your retainer does not fit properly, your teeth could still be shifting, even if you are wearing it. If it doesn't fit correctly, it won't work.

11. If you get any **dental work** (crowns/caps, fillings, implants) done after we make you retainers, the retainers may not fit. We advise you to come in for an appointment ASAP and let us know what was done so we can best adjust the retainer or make a new retainer for you to prevent your teeth from shifting. Replacements are charged a fee.

12. **Bonded retainers**: AKA "permanent retainers"- they are NOT actually permanent. They are just glued onto your teeth, therefore you don't take them in and out like other retainers. They may last for a few weeks, months, or years before they break or come unglued, but no matter what they WILL break at some point. These require you to be extremely careful when eating/chewing/flossing, and you will not be able to floss normally. You will have to thread the floss underneath the wire or use an interdental brush. This retainer is not meant to be the only retainer you wear. You still need to wear the clear plastic retainers over the bonded retainer to hold all your other teeth in place, as the bonded retainer is only glued to a few of your teeth, and therefore only keeps those few teeth straight. It is meant to act as more of a backup for people whose teeth shift very easily/quickly in addition to the clear retainer. If it breaks, we may be able to repair it, or we may need to replace it completely if it comes off, for a fee.

13. Your **wisdom teeth** coming in will NOT cause your teeth to crowd or move. This is a very common myth. We may recommend you have your wisdom teeth out for other reasons, but this is not one. Your teeth probably moved because you didn't wear your retainer. The average age for wisdom teeth removal is ~18/19. It can sometimes be needed earlier depending on your situation. Do not go longer than 2-3 days after wisdom teeth extraction to start wearing your retainers again. Please call our office for options if you are having trouble wearing them.

14. If there is a **rough edge** on your retainer, you may smooth it with an emory board/nail file, or you can trim it with fingernail scissors. If you don't feel comfortable doing this, you may call us and come in for an appointment.

15. If your teeth have **shifted** enough that you are no longer happy and you would like to straighten them back out again, we may need to do more treatment for a fee. Retainers do not move teeth, so if your teeth have shifted and you want them fixed, we CANNOT do this with a retainer. You will need to have a re-evaluation with Dr. Brenna to determine exactly what needs to be done, how long it will take, and how much it will cost. We do not re-treat for free.

16. We will see you for a **retainer check** 3 months from today. **Bring your retainers** to any retainer check appointments so we can see if they are still fitting/in good shape. Otherwise, we'll have to reschedule your appointment. After your retainer check appointment, we do not need to see you for a scheduled visit unless you have any issues or need a new retainer. Any visits you may need after this retainer check will be considered an office visit and can incur a visit fee.

Call us immediately and make an appointment if you lose or break a retainer. It is much easier (and less expensive) to replace or fix a retainer than to wait until your teeth get crooked and get treatment again!!

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