



Wear your retainer

Now that your braces have been removed, you and your orthodontist want you to keep that healthy, beautiful smile. Your orthodontist has determined that the best way for you to do that is by wearing a retainer(s).

While wearing a retainer is simple, it is a very complex and powerful appliance. A retainer is an important part of your orthodontic treatment. A retainer is designed to keep your teeth where your braces moved them. Wearing your retainer as instructed is the key to maintaining the success of your orthodontic treatment.

There are a variety of retainers. Some are removable and some are fixed—that is, they are cemented to your teeth. Your orthodontist will provide the kind of retainer that best maintains the new positions of your teeth.

Orthodontists receive an additional two to three years of specialized education beyond dental school to learn the proper way to align and straighten teeth. Only those who successfully complete this formal education may call themselves “orthodontists,” and only orthodontists can be members of the American Association of Orthodontists.

If you have any questions or concerns throughout your treatment or in the future, please consult your orthodontist or visit mylifemysmile.org.



My Life. My Smile. My Orthodontist.®

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Retainers

Helping keep everything straight



My Life. My Smile. My Orthodontist.®

Take care of your retainers and they'll take care of you

It's really up to you

If your retainers are to do their important job, you must do three things:

1. Wear Them As Directed

Retainers are effective only if you faithfully follow your orthodontist's instructions for wearing them. And they're doing their jobs only when they're in your mouth, not in your pocket or purse.

Remember: wearing that retainer after your braces are removed is the best way to preserve that healthy, beautiful smile you worked so hard to get.

2. Keep Them Clean

If you've been fitted with a removable retainer, it's easy to clean when you take it out. Your orthodontist will show you how.

If your retainer is attached to your teeth, it's important to brush thoroughly after meals and clean under the wire with dental floss at least once a day. Your orthodontist will teach you how to care for your fixed retainer. If you can't brush after a meal, be sure to at least rinse your mouth out with water until you have a chance to brush thoroughly.

Whether your retainer is removable or fixed, make sure you see your dentist for a thorough cleaning every six months (or more often, if recommended).

3. Handle Them With Care

Remember: whenever your retainer is not in your mouth, it should be in its case for safety. Retainers are easier to lose than you think, and they're expensive to replace. They fall out of pockets and purses. If you take your retainer out to eat and wrap it in a napkin, you may accidentally throw it away. When they're just lying around, retainers have a way of falling on the floor and being stepped on, or even being picked up by pets.

If you're instructed to wear your retainer for only a part of the day, keep it in its case when it's not being worn, so it won't be damaged or lost.

Preserve that healthy, beautiful smile you worked so hard to get



Make your retainer work for you

Your retainer is specially designed by your orthodontist to help you maintain the results from your treatment. Following these few simple guidelines for wearing and taking care of your retainer will make your treatment last. Your reward will be a lifetime of healthy, beautiful smiles.

Contact your orthodontist immediately if there is a problem with your retainer

If your retainer should break or be lost, contact your orthodontist at once for a replacement. If your retainer is not fitting properly—which may happen if you do not wear your retainer as prescribed by your orthodontist – or if your fixed retainer should become loose, call your orthodontist right away for an appointment.



Follow your orthodontist's instructions

Your retainer is designed to perform a vital role in your overall orthodontic treatment. It's very important that you wear your retainer exactly as you have been instructed. Otherwise, your treatment goals may not be maintained. If you're wearing retainers after braces and you don't follow your doctor's instructions, your teeth could move toward their original positions, erasing some of the great results you achieved from treatment.

You may need to wear your retainers quite a while, so be patient. Each person's case is different. Follow your orthodontist's instructions for wearing your retainers. In some cases, permanent retention will be necessary. Your orthodontist will determine how long you'll need to wear retainers.

It's important to choose an orthodontist

An orthodontist is a specialist in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of dental and facial irregularities. All orthodontists are dentists, but only about six percent of dentists are orthodontists. Admission to orthodontic programs is extremely competitive and selective.

It takes many years to become an orthodontist and the educational requirements are demanding.