

Advice for Musicians

Braces and wind instruments

Playing a wind instrument is a complex task involving the muscles of the face and lips, the tongue and the teeth. Orthodontic treatment may affect some wind and brass instrument players in their ability to practice and perform. Inexperienced musicians will probably find that wearing a brace does not change their performance very much, but more experienced proficient players may notice a greater change. The good news is that with practice and motivation, most of these musicians can adjust to wearing braces. This advice sheet explains what to expect during orthodontic treatment and suggests some ways of coping with the problems.

Before you start treatment you should talk to your orthodontist about the instrument you play, the brace you will need and the possible difficulties you may have with your musical performance whilst wearing a brace.

Advice for musicians wearing removable braces

- Ask your orthodontist if you are able to take your brace out when you play your musical instrument.
- Tell your orthodontist how many hours you practice each day. Leaving your brace out for long periods of time influences the success of your treatment.
- When you are not wearing your brace, make sure you keep it in a safe place so that you do not lose or break it.

Advice for musicians wearing fixed braces

- Some types of fixed brace may be more difficult to get used to than others. Before you start orthodontic treatment make sure your orthodontist knows that you play a wind instrument.
- If you're having a new brace fitted, try to arrange this at a time when you don't have important music exams, auditions or performances. Your music teacher should be able to advise you about important dates.
- If you have teeth removed as part of your treatment, it may be good idea to stop playing your instrument until healing has occurred. Ask your dentist for advice.
- Most wind instrument musicians will get used to wearing a fixed brace within a few weeks. The more you practice, the faster you will adjust to your new brace.
- If you play a woodwind instrument such as a clarinet or saxophone, you will probably adjust to your new brace very quickly.
- If you play a brass instrument such as a trumpet or trombone you may have problems playing high notes when your brace is first fitted. It will probably take a few months to adjust to your new brace.
- Because the mouthpiece of brass instrument is pressed against the lips, some players find that the inside of their lips become sore whilst practising or performing. If this is a problem for you, ask your music teacher if your mouthpiece can be changed for a larger one to spread the load more.

- Your brace may rub the inside of your lips and cheeks. Various products made of plastic or wax can be used to protect your lips when you are playing. Ask your orthodontist what would be most suitable for you.
- Wind instrument players sometimes get a dry mouth whilst practising or performing. If you need a drink, water is the best thing. Fruit drinks, fizzy drinks and sugary drinks can all damage your teeth.
- If your musical performance is very important to you, it may be possible for your orthodontist to fit part of your brace to see how you cope with this before having the whole brace fitted. Ask your orthodontist about this.
- When your orthodontic treatment is finished and your brace is removed it will take a little while to get used to playing without a brace, but your new tooth position should not affect your ability to play.

Although having a brace will temporarily affect musical performance, the good news is that with practice and motivation you should be able to adjust to wearing braces. Before starting treatment talk to your orthodontist about how treatment may affect your performance. If you have problems during treatment ask your orthodontist for advice.

GOOD LUCK