

Some information for your teacher

Here is some background information in response to some FAQs from teachers.

What is orthodontic treatment?

Orthodontic treatment corrects irregularities of the teeth or developing jaws and improves the function and appearance of the mouth and face.

Why do so many children seem to have treatment?

About one third of all children have a demonstrable need of orthodontic treatment and a further third are borderline cases. The causes of these widespread dental anomalies are still somewhat unclear and controversial.

How is treatment carried out?

Orthodontic treatment is carried out with braces of various types.

Some simple movements of the teeth are carried out with a **removable upper brace** which should be worn all the time. This type of brace covers the roof of the mouth and may interfere with speech for the first day or two. Continued difficulties with speaking are usually due to the patient not wearing the brace continuously as directed. The child may need your support to persist with wear during the first couple of weeks. The brace may however be removed at school when playing a wind or brass instrument or when playing sports. In these cases the brace should be placed carefully in a protective case and replaced back in the mouth immediately afterwards. The NHS now makes a charge to the patient for lost or badly damaged braces.

Treatment to correct the growth of the jaws may involve a more complicated removable appliance known as a **functional appliance** which fits to both upper and lower teeth. This type of brace has similar problems to the simple removable brace described above but this type may be removed at mealtimes for eating as well as for playing sports and wind and brass instrument playing. Again the braces should be looked after carefully so that they do not get lost or damaged when out of the mouth.

Straightening the teeth to current standards require braces which are fixed permanently to the teeth. These **fixed braces** may sometimes be referred to as “train track” braces.

Why are appointments so frequent?

Initially several appointments may be required to assess the patient’s teeth, take records, arrange for any extractions and fit their braces. Subsequently they will need to be seen every 6-8 weeks to assess progress and have adjustments carried out.

Why are appointments in school time?

The great majority of orthodontic patients are in full time education and it is just not possible to schedule all appointments outside school hours. A different appointment time can be requested each visit so that the same lesson is not missed every time.

How long will the treatment go on?

Active treatment typically lasts between 18 and 24 months. Retainers are then fitted to hold the teeth while they settle.

Should I expect children to be in pain during treatment?

When a brace is first fitted the pressure on the teeth may cause some discomfort or pain for a few days. This normally wears off within a week. Simple pain killers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can help to reduce this. The orthodontist will usually provide soft wax and instruct the child in how to place a pea sized ball of this over any metal components of the brace which rub their lips or cheeks in the first few days.

What if the brace break?

Patients are given instructions as to the care of their brace and what to do if it breaks. They are advised to contact the orthodontic practice as soon as possible to arrange an appointment.

How does orthodontic treatment affect sport?

There is a risk of cutting the inside of the mouth during contact sports when the child is wearing a brace. It is recommended that removable appliances are removed for contact sports, and that mouth guards are worn over fixed appliances.

How does orthodontic treatment affect playing musical instruments?

Removable braces may be removed while playing wind and brass instruments. Fixed braces may cause some initial difficulty especially for brass players; however with persistence most players find they can overcome these successfully. If necessary soft wax or guards to place over the appliance may be obtained from the orthodontic surgery.

What else should I know?

Some teenagers feel self-conscious when wearing braces especially in the early stages of treatment. It is helpful if teachers are discreetly supportive, particularly if the child becomes shy or withdrawn. Any teasing or bullying on the part of other pupils obviously needs to be dealt with appropriately.