

Retainers

Congratulations on your beautiful smile. Your braces have been removed and you are ready for your retainers. You have worked hard to get to this point and you want to maintain your new smile for many years to come, so it is important to follow the specific instructions given to you. Retainer wear is very important in maintaining the alignment of your teeth. Failure to wear retainers as directed, even for a short period of time, may cause the teeth to shift from their current position.

For the **first 6 months**, you should wear your retainers **full-time (24 hours/day)**, except while eating, brushing or playing a sport that requires a mouthguard.

Studies show that it takes about 6 months for the fibers in the gum tissue to detach from their old position and reattach and stabilize into their new positions.

After 6 months, you should wear your retainers **8-12 hours/day** (usually when sleeping).

Our bodies continue to change throughout our lives and there are many forces constantly acting on the teeth. Fibers in the gum tissue, muscles in the tongue, lips, and cheeks, eruption of wisdom teeth, bone growth and remodeling can all cause the teeth to shift over time. Retainers are a way to overcome these forces of nature to maintain the alignment of our teeth over the long term.

After 2 years, the amount of retainer wear is determined on an individual basis. Some people can get away with not wearing retainers, but long-term studies show that most people will have some degree of relapse over the long term if they do not wear their retainers. Dr. Wigal will probably never ask you to discontinue wear of your retainers; however, he may advise you to reduce your wear to 3-5 nights a week, or less. If your retainers begin to feel tight when you put them in, this is probably a sign that your teeth are beginning to shift and that you should increase the amount of time you are wearing your retainers.

Essix Retainers

Essix retainers are clear plastic retainers. They are very esthetic and effective in retaining teeth that have been significantly rotated and in maintaining the vertical position of teeth. The Essix retainer may feel very tight when it is first placed in the mouth. To take out the Essix, grab the top of the retainer with your fingernail in the back and pull down one side at a time. Once it starts to come down in the back, move towards the front of the mouth and pull down on the Essix. If you have trouble grabbing the retainer or do not have fingernails, a tool can be provided to help take them out. Try to avoid pulling the Essix straight out towards the cheeks as this may cause the retainer to flex and eventually crack. After a few days of wear, the Essix retainer will be much easier to take out.

Hawley Retainers

Hawley retainers are retainers made of acrylic and wires. They effectively maintain the alignment of teeth, while simultaneously allowing for the controlled, minute movement of teeth referred to as "settling". When a Hawley retainer fits properly, the wire should be touching the surface of the tooth

towards the lip and the acrylic should be touching the surface of the tooth towards the tongue. To remove the appliance, place your fingers or thumbs on the small loops of wire in the canine areas and gently apply pressure to dislodge the appliance. Be careful to avoid placing force on the wire across the front as this will cause it to loosen over time.

Use, Care and Maintenance Instructions:

At first, your retainers may feel awkward in your mouth and you may find it difficult to speak normally. Practice reading out loud and you will adjust in a few days.

Keep retainers clean by removing them from the mouth and rinsing with cool water. While holding the retainer in the palm of your hand, use a toothbrush with mild soap and cool water to gently scrub the appliance. Toothpaste can be used, but may dull the plastic. Never use hot water on your retainers, as they may distort.

Retainers are made of plastic. Therefore, you should keep them away from heat including things such as: car dashboards, boiling water, microwave ovens, etc... The plastic will distort and the retainers will no longer fit properly if it is exposed to excessive heat.

Do not eat or drink (other than water) with your retainers in your mouth. Eating with retainers in the mouth can cause excessive wear and distortion of the retainers. Drinking certain liquids can cause staining of the retainers and acidic beverages can begin to dull the retainers and weaken them.

Because your retainers are small, they can be easy to lose. Store the retainers in the retainer case provided and place it in a safe location when it is not in use.

Never put your retainers in your pocket without the case: this is the number one way in which retainers are broken.

To avoid losing them, never wrap your retainers in a napkin and leave them lying around at meal time. They can be easily thrown away by you or someone else.

Keep your retainers away from pets, especially dogs and cats. Animals love to chew on retainers and have been known to reach high places to get to them.

You will schedule appointments periodically for us to check your retainers. Please make sure you bring your retainers to every appointment so adjustments can be made, if needed.

If you feel that your retainers are not fitting properly, or you lose or break your retainer(s), please call us immediately. Remember, relapse can occur rapidly, particularly in the first few months after the braces are removed.

Retainers are costly to replace, so please treat them like valuable jewelry.

There will be a charge to repair or make a new retainer if it is lost or broken, or if it no longer fits due to failure to wear as prescribed.