

If you have not had a complete dental examination within three months before your braces come off, please see your regular dentist immediately.

Any time your retainers are not in your mouth, they should be stored in the protective case we have given you.

Here are some general rules to follow:

- 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. This is the most common way that retainers are lost.
- Please keep your retainers away from pets, especially dogs and cats. Your furry friends love to chew on retainers and have been known to reach high places to get to them!
- Retainers are costly to replace, so please treat them like valuable jewelry.

You will schedule appointments periodically for us to check your retainers. It is very important that you keep these appointments to prevent any unwanted changes. Hawley retainers will tend to loosen over time and invisible retainers may wear down or crack with prolonged use. Always bring your retainers to your retainer check appointments.

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

Though easier than having braces, wearing your retainers is equally important to the maintenance of your new smile. You have worked hard to get to this point (and so did we), so please follow the instructions and smile often!

How often should I wear my retainer?

At first your retainer may feel awkward in your mouth and you may find it difficult to speak. Practice reading out loud and you will adjust in a couple of days. To maintain your teeth in their new positions, you must wear your retainers exactly as we recommend. For clear (invisible) retainers and Hawley retainers, this is usually during sleeping hours. This gives ample time for the bone to heal and the teeth to settle into their new positions. This night time retainer wear will counteract all of the forces that act on your teeth throughout the day (e.g. swallowing, chewing etc).

If you do not want your teeth to shift, you may need to wear your retainers from time to time for the rest of your life. It may sound tedious, but it really is a small price to pay after all you did to get here!

How do I keep my retainers clean?

Before you brush your teeth, remove your retainers and rinse them with cold water. Never use hot water on your retainers, as they will distort (and please do not leave your retainers in the sun, in a warm car, or on a heater – these will also have the same effect). If plaque begins to build up in your retainers, brush them gently with a toothbrush (for invisible retainers, avoid toothpaste; it tends to scratch your retainers, making them cloudy). Clear (invisible) retainers can be soaked in a denture cleaner (e.g. Polident®) at least once a week. Remember to soak them in cool rather than warm or hot water (contrary to what some denture cleaner manufacturers recommend). Some patients have been found to be allergic to commercial denture cleaners, so please be aware of any symptoms that may indicate an adverse reaction to these products. Specifically, many commercial denture cleaners contain persulfate, which in some people can cause irritation, tissue damage, gum tenderness, hives, respiratory conditions and hypotension (abnormally low blood pressure). Also, denture cleaner should never be ingested nor used as a mouthwash. Please carefully follow instructions on the label.

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