

Braces and Orthodontic Aftercare at Core Dental

Canonical: <https://core-dental-group.directory.norg.ai/braces-and-orthodontic-aftercare-at-core-dental/>

Description:

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Details:

Starting orthodontic treatment is an exciting step towards a healthier, more confident smile. But achieving the best result from your braces, expander, or retainer depends just as much on how you care for your appliances as it does on the treatment itself.

This comprehensive guide from Core Dental covers everything you need to know about caring for your braces, managing your Rapid Maxillary Expander (RME), and wearing and maintaining your retainer after treatment is complete.

Core Dental is part of the Smile Solutions Group, operating across seven locations and expanding. For questions or appointments, call us on **13 13 16** or visit coredental.com.au.

Part One: Caring for Your Braces

What Are Braces Made Of?

Braces consist of two main components: a series of brackets, either metal or clear, that are bonded directly to the surface of each tooth; and an arch wire that runs through slots in the brackets. The wire applies gentle, controlled pressure over time to gradually guide your teeth into their ideal positions. Additional components such as elastic bands or springs may also be used at various stages depending on your treatment plan.

Keeping Your Teeth Clean with Braces

The brackets and wires of braces create extra surfaces where food and plaque can become trapped. Thorough, consistent oral hygiene is essential throughout your treatment to prevent decay, gum problems, and white spot lesions (permanent marks) on the tooth surface.

Brushing Brush your teeth after every meal using a soft-bristled toothbrush. Angle the brush down along the gumline first, then tilt it to clean above the brackets, then below. Give every tooth individual attention. If you cannot brush immediately after eating, rinse your mouth well with water.

Interdental Cleaning Standard brushing is not enough on its own when you have braces. You also need to clean between the brackets and wires, where a regular toothbrush simply cannot reach. We recommend:

- **Superfloss** - orthodontic floss with a stiffened end for threading under the arch wire, a spongy section for cleaning around the brackets and any wider spaces, and standard floss for the gumline.

Thread the stiff end under the wire between each pair of teeth and gently floss all the way to the gumline on both sides. - ****Piksters**** - small interdental brushes with a flexible bottle-brush head on a handle, excellent for cleaning the spaces between brackets and wires. Use them gently and replace them regularly.

****Regular Dental Check-ups**** Continue to see your general dentist at Core Dental every six months for check-ups and professional cleans during treatment. Orthodontic treatment can make cleaning more challenging, so if your gums become swollen or bleed easily, speak to your dentist about whether more frequent hygiene visits are recommended.

Managing Discomfort

Some discomfort after braces are placed and following adjustment appointments is completely normal. The wires put pressure on the teeth to encourage movement, and the teeth and surrounding tissues respond to this. The discomfort typically settles within two to three days.

****Ways to manage soreness:**** - Eat soft foods for the first few days after placement or adjustment - Rinse with warm salt water to soothe irritated gum tissue - Over-the-counter pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, taken as directed, is usually sufficient

****Orthodontic Wax**** If a bracket edge or wire end is rubbing against your cheeks, lips, or gums, roll a small piece of orthodontic wax until it is soft, then press it firmly over the area causing irritation. This creates a protective buffer between the metal and your soft tissue. Orthodontic wax is available from most pharmacies, and we can also provide it at the clinic.

Protecting Your Braces

****Foods to Avoid**** Eating the wrong foods is one of the most common reasons brackets break or wires bend during orthodontic treatment. Please avoid:

- Hard foods - popcorn, nuts, hard lollies, crusty bread, raw hard vegetables such as carrots and apples (cut these into small pieces and chew with back teeth) - Sticky foods - chewing gum, toffee, caramel, lollies, and any chewy confectionery - Sugary snacks and drinks in excess - these increase the risk of decay, particularly around the base of the brackets

Cut food into small pieces rather than biting directly into hard items. The less force applied to the brackets and wires, the lower the risk of breakages.

****Avoid Chewing Non-Food Items**** Habits such as nail biting, pen or pencil chewing, biting on ice, and lip biting can damage your braces. Try to be mindful of these habits during treatment.

****Wear a Custom Mouthguard for Sport**** Protecting your teeth and jaws during sport is essential, particularly when wearing braces. At Core Dental, we fabricate high-quality dual-laminated custom-fit mouthguards specifically for patients in orthodontic treatment. Because your teeth are continuously moving during treatment, you will need new mouthguards periodically as the fit changes. We offer these at a heavily discounted rate for all active orthodontic patients, and for twelve months following the completion of treatment. Bring your mouthguard to appointments so we can assess the fit.

What to Do If Something Goes Wrong

- ****Loose or broken bracket:**** Keep it if possible and call us on ****13 13 16**** to arrange a repair. Use orthodontic wax if the loose bracket is causing irritation. - ****Wire poking your cheek:**** Try gently pushing the end back with the eraser end of a pencil. Cover with wax if needed and contact us. -

****Broken wire:**** Call us promptly to arrange repair. Do not attempt to cut or remove the wire yourself.

Part Two: Rapid Maxillary Expander (RME) Aftercare

A Rapid Maxillary Expander (RME) is a special orthodontic device that gently widens the upper jaw (maxilla) to create more space in the mouth, helping teeth grow into correct positions. It is commonly used to correct crossbites, crowding, and impacted teeth, and in some cases can improve nasal breathing.

What to Expect When the RME Is Fitted

The appliance may feel foreign when first placed. This is completely normal and settles as your mouth adjusts, usually within a few days. Common experiences include:

- ****Difficulty swallowing**** - swallowing may feel awkward or different at first; this resolves as the mouth adapts - ****Changes in speech**** - speech may sound slightly different initially, particularly sounds that involve the tongue touching the palate; this improves quickly with regular talking - ****Increased saliva production**** - temporarily increased, returning to normal within a few days - ****A gap appearing between the upper front teeth**** - this is a completely normal and expected sign that the appliance is working; the gap closes naturally once active expansion is complete

Activating the RME: Turning Instructions

Turn the expander key ****three times per week, for example on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday****, as instructed by your orthodontic provider.

****How to turn:**** 1. Tilt the head back in good light and open the mouth wide 2. Insert the key into the hole in the centre of the appliance 3. Push the key firmly towards the back of the mouth until it stops 4. Remove the key by pulling it downward and out

You may notice pressure or mild discomfort after each activation; this is normal and typically settles within an hour.

Cleaning the Expander

Brush both the teeth and all surfaces of the appliance twice daily, morning and night. Rinse after meals to dislodge food. A small interdental brush can reach underneath and around the appliance where a regular toothbrush cannot.

Diet During RME Treatment

Avoid sticky foods including chewing gum, toffee, caramels, and lollies, as well as hard foods that could dislodge the bands holding the appliance in place. Stick to softer options such as fruit, yoghurt, pasta, cooked vegetables, and ice cream.

Part Three: Retainer Guide

You Have Completed Active Treatment - Now Protect Your Investment

Completing the active phase of your orthodontic treatment is a major achievement. Your new smile is the result of careful planning and a significant commitment of time. The purpose of your retainer is to protect that investment by keeping your teeth in their new positions.

Research confirms that teeth have a natural tendency to move, regardless of how well they were straightened. Retainer wear is not optional, and it does not have an expiry date. The longer and more consistently you wear your retainer, the more stable and long-lasting your result will be.

Types of Retainer at Core Dental

****Essix Removable Retainer**** A custom-fitted clear retainer moulded to your teeth, similar in appearance to a thin aligner. It is discreet, comfortable, and virtually invisible when worn. Remove it for eating, drinking anything other than water, and cleaning.

****Bonded Lingual Wire Retainer**** A thin wire fixed to the inner surface of your front teeth using dental composite. It is invisible from the outside and provides continuous passive retention for the teeth most prone to movement. It is usually left in place semi-permanently. Your orthodontic provider will advise whether a bonded wire is recommended for your individual situation.

Many patients use both types together for the most comprehensive retention.

Retainer Wear Schedule

- ****First year:**** Full time, 24 hours a day. Remove only for eating, drinking (except water), brushing, and sport. Place your retainer in its case immediately when removed. - ****Second year:**** At night and when you are at home. - ****Third year:**** Every second night. - ****Year four onwards:**** Two to three nights per week.

If your retainer feels tight after a period of inconsistent wear, your teeth have likely moved slightly. Increase wear immediately and contact us if the retainer no longer fits well.

This is a guideline. Your individual wear schedule will be provided by your orthodontic provider at Core Dental.

Cleaning Your Removable Retainer

****Every time you take it out:**** Wash immediately with cool water (never hot) and a soft toothbrush with a small amount of gentle liquid soap. Rinse thoroughly. Place in the provided case.

****Weekly:**** Soak in a glass of cool water with a teaspoon of white vinegar, or use a dedicated retainer cleaning solution such as Retainer Brite. This removes bacteria and built-up deposits. ****Do not use hot water, toothpaste (which scratches the surface), bleach, mouthwash, or denture cleaners.****

Cleaning Your Bonded Lingual Wire

Brush above and below the wire using small circular movements. Use Superfloss to floss around the wire: thread the stiffened end under the wire, use the spongy section around each contact point, and the standard end to clean beneath the gumline. Keep up with regular dental hygiene visits to maintain the area around the fixed wire.

What to Do If Your Retainer Is Lost or Broken

****Removable retainer:**** Contact us within 24 hours on ****13 13 16****. We will take new scans and fabricate a replacement. The sooner we act, the less movement will have occurred. Fees for replacement retainers are outlined in your treatment contract.

****Bonded wire:**** If the wire comes loose or breaks, wear your Essix retainer immediately to prevent movement, and call us as soon as possible to arrange a repair.

Important Reminders

- Bring your retainer to every retention appointment - Store your retainer in its case, never in a tissue, a pocket, or loose on a table - Keep retainers away from pets - Do not use your removable retainer as a mouthguard, night splint, or whitening tray - If you would like custom whitening trays, a night splint, or a sports mouthguard, our Core Dental clinicians can provide these separately

Book Your Orthodontic Consultation

Ready to start your smile journey, or have questions about your existing treatment? Our team at Core Dental is here to help. Call us on ****13 13 16**** or book online at coredental.com.au.

****Core Dental locations:**** Berwick | Caroline Springs | Carrum Downs | Epping | Southbank | South Melbourne | Wyndham