

ORTHODONTIC FACT SHEET

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

Orthodontic treatment promotes a pleasing, healthy smile, healthier teeth and gums and a better bite for normal chewing. Orthodontic treatment depends for much of its success on the understanding and co-operation of patients. Please read this Fact Sheet carefully and ask about anything you do not understand. While recognising the benefits of healthy teeth and a pleasing smile, all forms of medical and dental treatment, including orthodontics, have some risks and limitations. Fortunately, in orthodontics, complications are infrequent and when they do occur they are usually of only minor consequence. Nevertheless, they should be considered when making the decision to undergo orthodontic treatment. Keep in mind that with orthodontic treatment, like other healing arts, results cannot be guaranteed. The unknown factor in any orthodontic correction is the response of the patient to the orthodontic treatment. It is important that you are also aware of changes that are likely to occur after your treatment program is completed. Many people believe that once their teeth have been straightened they will stay that way for the rest of their life. Unfortunately this is not correct as teeth are like every other part of the body and may change over time.

With this in mind it is important to read and understand the following information:

- **ORAL HYGIENE**

It is essential that extra care be taken with oral hygiene during orthodontic treatment. Orthodontic appliances do not cause tooth decay. However, if orthodontic patients do not brush their teeth frequently and thoroughly, gum disease, tooth decay and permanent markings on the teeth (decalcification) can occur. These same problems can occur without braces, but the risk is increased with braces due to the many areas food and plaque can accumulate.

- **PERIODONTAL HEALTH (GUMS)**

Inflammation of the gums and loss of supporting bone can occur if bacterial plaque is not adequately removed on a daily basis using an excellent oral hygiene technique.

- **DISCOMFORT**

The braces may irritate the gums, cheeks or lips, particularly in the early stages of treatment. Other types of appliances may also cause irritation to the surface of the tongue. We will provide instructions to you to minimise these effects. After each adjustment of the appliances, your teeth may be tender for several days. This is to be expected and will gradually diminish.

- **LENGTH OF TREATMENT TIME**

The Orthodontist will give you an estimate of the length of your treatment time. However this is only an estimate and should be regarded as such. Atypical growth, poor patient co-operation, poor oral hygiene, broken and loose appliances and missed appointments can lengthen the treatment time and affect the quality of the result.

- **ATYPICAL GROWTH**

Insufficient, excessive or asymmetrical changes in the growth of the jaws may limit our ability to achieve the desired result. If growth becomes disproportionate during the orthodontic treatment, the treatment plan may need to be altered to adapt to the changing skeletal pattern. This in turn may lengthen the treatment period. Growth changes that occur after orthodontic treatment may alter the treatment result and may necessitate further orthodontic treatment.

- **BROKEN AND LOOSE APPLIANCES**

If you bite on food that is too hard or experience trauma to the teeth (eg: sporting injuries or other accidents) you may break or loosen part of your orthodontic appliance. As a result, this broken or loose piece of your appliance could be accidentally swallowed. You should immediately inform the practice of any broken or loose attachments.

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• JAW JOINTS (TMJ)

Occasionally patients may experience pain, dysfunction or noise (eg: clicking) in the jaw joints. These problems may occur with or without orthodontic treatment. It is important to let your Orthodontist know if you are experiencing any of these symptoms. Some patients are more susceptible to TMJ problems than others. Just as for painful conditions in other joints in the body, discomfort in the TMJ can last from a few days to several weeks or longer. In more severe cases, referral to a Prosthodontist (specialist in jaw joint therapy) may be required.

• TOOTH VITALITY

Sometimes a tooth may have been traumatised by a previous accident, or a tooth may be decayed or have large fillings that can cause damage to the nerve of the tooth. In some cases orthodontic tooth movement may aggravate teeth with these conditions. This may result in loss of tooth vitality requiring removal of the nerve of the tooth (root canal therapy).

• ROOT SHORTENING

In some patients the length of the roots of the teeth may shorten during orthodontic treatment. Some patients are prone to this happening, some are not. Usually this shortening does not have significant consequences, but on rare occasions it may affect the stability of the teeth involved.

• THE ROLE OF YOUR GENERAL DENTIST

During your orthodontic treatment it is essential for your teeth to be examined at regular intervals by your General Dentist to check for dental decay. We recommend 6 monthly examinations throughout the treatment program. Additional dental treatment may also be required if your teeth vary from normal in either shape, colour, number or size.

• CHANGES IN TOOTH POSITION FOLLOWING ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

When your fixed orthodontic appliances are removed you will be provided with retainers. These retainers are essential to prevent movement of the teeth. The retainers will be either removable plates or fixed wires attached to the inner surfaces of the front teeth. Please remember that there will always be the potential for teeth to move from their corrected position due to varied forces that may act on the dental arch (eg: teenage growth, eruption of wisdom teeth, everyday chewing, jaw clenching or other habits). We advise that you continue to wear these retainers at least until facial growth is completed and the wisdom teeth are either erupted or removed. In some cases permanent use of retainers will be necessary to maintain perfect alignment of the teeth.

• GENERAL HEALTH

General medical problems may affect orthodontic treatment. Please keep your Orthodontist informed of any changes to your medical health throughout your orthodontic treatment program.

Thank you for taking the time to read this important information. If you have any questions associated with any aspect of this Orthodontic Fact Sheet please do not hesitate to seek our help and advice. We are acting in your interests at all times.

WITH THANKS