

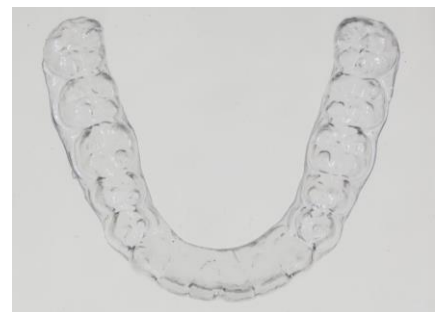


## Orthodontics: Wearing a Retainer

Retainers are important orthodontic appliances. You will get a retainer after your braces are removed. Retainers hold the teeth in place and allow the position of the teeth to stabilize. Without a retainer, the position of your teeth will change.

### Types of retainers

- **Essix retainer:** This type of retainer is made from clear acrylic (Picture 1). Essix retainers can be removed. Like many appliances worn in the mouth, they may need to be replaced over time.
- **Hawley retainer:** This type of retainer can also be removed. It is made from acrylic and metal wire (Picture 2). This type of retainer can be adjusted by your orthodontist. Like many appliances worn in the mouth, they may need to be replaced over time.
- **Fixed or bonded retainer:** This retainer is a small, thin wire that is attached or bonded to the backside of the front teeth (Picture 3). It is semi-permanent and not intended to be removed. With good care and oral hygiene, it can stay in place for years. It is important to clean and floss around the retainer. If the area is not cleaned properly the teeth and gums can be affected. If the bonded retainer breaks, gets loose or if the wire appears to be bent out of shape, you will need to schedule an appointment to have it repaired. A fixed retainer can be damaged by hard food.



**Picture 1** Essix retainer



**Picture 2** Hawley retainer



**Picture 3** Fixed or bonded retainer

## Your retainer

The orthodontist or assistant will show you how to place and/or remove your retainer. At first, the appliance may feel tight or uncomfortable and may affect your speech. You may notice an increased flow of saliva. This will improve as you adjust to wearing the retainer.

- Wear your retainer as directed by your orthodontist.
- Contact your orthodontist if the retainer is lost or broken.

## Retainer care

- Do not eat or drink while wearing a removable retainer.
- Rinse removable retainers with tap water after wearing. Do not use hot water.
- Clean your removable retainers with mild hand soap or denture cleaning tablets.
- Do not use toothpaste on your retainer. Toothpaste scratches its surface.
- When not in your mouth, keep your retainer in its case.
- Do not put your retainer in a napkin or paper towel. It might be thrown away.
- Keep your retainer and the case out of reach of pets and children.
- If your retainer breaks or is lost or damaged, contact your orthodontist right away.

## Important information

Your orthodontist will need to check your retainer regularly. **It is very important to keep these appointments.**

- Bring your retainer with you to all retainer check appointments.
- If you do not wear retainer as directed, your teeth will shift and move.
- If your teeth shift or move, you may need more treatment or a new retainer.
- Contact your orthodontist if your retainer is broken, lost or no longer fits.

If you have questions, be sure to ask your orthodontist.