

Digital guide to... align

straight teeth, good oral health and clear aligner treatment

The importance of good oral health is not only important for safeguarding the teeth, gums and other soft tissues of the mouth but for the rest of the body too.

What are the benefits of well aligned teeth?



Aesthetic advantages



Improved function



Improved oral health



All these should form part of the discussion about achieving your beautiful new smile.

Clear aligners vs traditional braces



According to scientific studies, those going through orthodontic treatment with fixed braces have much higher levels of bacteria and plaque build-up than those in clear aligners.

This plaque build-up surrounds cemented on metal brackets and wires of the fixed braces and this build-up can lead to all sorts of gum health problems immediately and in the future, possibly leading to more treatments and dental visits than someone with clear aligners¹.

By contrast aligners are easily removed, so when it's time to clean your teeth there is nothing stopping you from getting to those hard to reach places.

- Eating can be a concern for those who are going through fixed orthodontic treatment.
- There is the risk of tooth discolouration on the areas that aren't covered by braces and you need to avoid your favourite foods because they could get caught in the wires and brackets.
- Chewy, crunchy, sticky and hard foods are all to be avoided because of their risk of damaging the braces

By contrast wearing aligners allows you to eat without fear. Why? Because you remove them when it's time for you to enjoy your meal.



Oral Hygiene doesn't stop with aligners; you still need to brush

Dental professionals recommend that every time you remove your aligners for eating or drinking that you brush and floss before replacing into your mouth. So wearing aligners actually ensures that you adopt a strong oral hygiene routine.

Dental Hygienist Anna Middleton advises: *"Orthodontic treatment provides an exciting prospect for patients, but it also brings its own challenges. Poor oral hygiene can lead to problems, such as an increased incidence of dental caries, gingivitis, or periodontal (gum) disease. However, it is important that patients are made aware of the importance of cleaning their teeth thoroughly after meals before replacing the aligners to avoid food, and especially sugary foods, being trapped against the teeth."*



See Anna's tips for cleaning your teeth and your aligners below...

Comfort is important too

When you're wearing something 22 hours' day-in, day-out you want it to be comfortable. Invisalign's aligners are made of soft polymer material, which means that cuts, tears and ulcers associated with metal braces can be avoided and makes cleaning your mouth a more comfortable experience. After a day or two of mild discomfort when you first start aligner treatment you can live your life as normal.



Former President of the International Federation of Dental Hygienists, Maria Perno Goldie, speaks from both professional and personal perspective: *"I am personally in the process of undergoing Invisalign therapy, and the aligners are very comfortable to wear, because they are removable, self-care is very easy. The aligners can be removed to eat or in any special situation where you might need them out of the mouth for a time."*

Only Invisalign aligners are made with patented SmartTrack material, helping to move your teeth faster^{**} and more comfortably than with braces* – making it a great choice to align your teeth discreetly.

* Compared to Invisalign aligners previously made from single-layer (EX30) material. In a study by Miller et al, with adults measuring pain in the first week of treatment. Kevin Miller et al. A comparison of treatment impacts between Invisalign aligner and fixed appliance therapy during the first week of treatment.

**Gu, J et al. Evaluation of Invisalign treatment effectiveness and efficiency compared with conventional fixed appliances using the Peer Assessment Rating index. Am J Orthod Dentofacial Orthop February 2017;151:259-66 Buschang, P et al. Comparative time efficiency of aligner therapy and conventional edgewise braces. Angle Orthodontist, Vol 84, No 3, 2014

Having straight teeth helps to improve dental hygiene

There is evidence to suggest that having orthodontic treatment may help your oral health in the long run, as it can be challenging to clean overcrowded teeth. If you have been advised that your oral health is being compromised because your teeth are misaligned having Invisalign treatment could help you. Aligners are less invasive than traditional fixed braces and the comfort level and ease of self-care is less challenging.



Dental Therapist Melonie Prebble agrees: *"There is no doubt straighter teeth are easier to keep clean. Plaque accumulates and stagnates in tighter, overcrowded mouths causing gum inflammation, poor oral hygiene and periodontal (gum) disease and unsightly stains".*

Does the journey end with Invisalign aligners?



Once you've gone through your Invisalign treatment you will need to wear a clear retainer, as there is always a risk that your teeth will want to drift back to their original position if they aren't retained. Many orthodontists will advise fixing a wire to the back of the teeth to hold them in their new position. The problem with this is that it makes tooth cleaning and flossing very challenging and plaque accumulation about the wire is very common.

By contrast Viverra retainers uphold the treatment principles of the Invisalign system, they are a removable and clear retention system for both Invisalign users and traditional bracket patients. Viverra retainers are made from material 30% stronger than other removable retainers, therefore less likely to develop cracks, indentations or scratches where bacteria can flourish.

1. Marziani Karkhanavich, Denise Chow, Jennifer Spivak, David Sherman, Robert J. Boylan, Robert G. Norman, Ronald G. Craig and George J. Cisneros, (2013) Periodontal status of adult patients treated with fixed buccal appliances and removable aligners over one year of active orthodontic therapy. The Angle Orthodontist 83, 146-151. Online publication date: 1-Jan-2013.

Top tips for cleaning your mouth and your aligners from Dental Hygienist Anna Middleton



There are several types of removable dental appliances:

- ✳ Aligners: Clear braces, such as Invisalign aligners, which are worn for up to 22 hours a day to straighten teeth
- ✳ Retainers: Worn after orthodontic treatment - both traditional fixed and clear aligner therapy - during the day or at night to ensure that teeth don't shift over time, thus undoing to tooth alignment. A bonded retainer is a wire worn behind your teeth to keep them from moving back to their original position.

Oral hygiene tips for people having clear aligner treatment, or wearing retainers:

- ✳ It is very important to clean your teeth every time you remove your aligners or retainers to eat or drink, or after they have been in your mouth overnight
- ✳ Use an electric toothbrush, placing the bristles, loaded with toothpaste on the gum line - it is clinically proven to be more effective than a manual brush
- ✳ Clean between teeth with floss or interdental brushes - if your teeth are being realigned because they are overcrowded this is even more important
- ✳ Use a powered flosser or irrigator as an adjunct to interdental cleaning to power wash your teeth and help remove food and plaque from hard to reach places (especially if you have a bonded retainer)
- ✳ Use a single tufted/interspace brush or super floss to clear around the wire if you have a bonded retainer
- ✳ Use an alcohol-free mouthwash with fluoride at a separate time to brushing to help remove debris and protect against dental decay
- ✳ You should change your toothbrush (or electric toothbrush head) every three months as well, and clean it daily, allow it to air dry, and make sure you store it away from other brushes and away from an open lavatory
- ✳ Visit a dental hygienist for professional cleaning every six months (or as advised)

How to clean your removable dental appliances:

If you wear a removable appliance, you might be wondering how to care for it. Your appliance sits inside your mouth and against your teeth, so it quickly accumulates bacteria, plaque and calculus (hardened plaque). Just like you brush your teeth every day, it's important to clean your aligners or retainers every day after each time they're worn.

What happens if you don't clean your appliance?

Without cleaning your appliance regularly, it will keep collecting bacteria and plaque from your mouth while you wear it. Over time, it may even start to smell or taste funny if you don't clean it often enough.

More importantly, appliances can harbour dangerous bacteria. While many bacteria are normally found in the mouth, when too many build up, they can cause gum disease, dental decay and oral thrush.

Cleaning your appliance is just as important as brushing your teeth. You need to clean your appliance in warm water with a cleaner (tooth paste or special aligner/retainer cleaner) once a day to keep it in good condition. It's a good idea to brush it out after each meal as well.

Signs of an unclean appliance

- ✳ The appliance smells or tastes bad
- ✳ There is a film on the appliance
- ✳ The appliance looks cloudy
- ✳ It has been more than a few days since it was cleaned



What happens if there are white spots on the appliance?

White spots could be mineral build-up (calculus) caused by plaque solidifying on the appliance. Another sign that an appliance needs cleaning is it keeps breaking or cracking. Just as bacteria can damage the teeth, they can also damage the appliance.

How to use cleaning tablets periodically to clean dental appliances:

Clean removable appliances with warm water and a cleaning tablet to prevent bacteria accumulating. Simply pop one cleaning tablet in a cup of warm water and place your appliance inside. Soak for 15-30 minutes, then rinse under running water before wearing.

This helps to kill bacteria, reduce odour, remove plaque and debris and maintain freshness of your dental appliance.

For more information about Invisalign treatment please visit www.invisalign.co.uk

