

Information for Patients

Orthodontic Emergencies during the COVID outbreak



Orthodontic emergencies occur occasionally and, although they may be a little upsetting for the patient and parents, they are usually fairly simple to resolve by the patient or parents. For some emergencies, patients may need to contact their orthodontist as soon as possible. Only in rare occasions that patients need to be seen by the emergency out-of-hours dentist/clinic.

Emergency Treatments

A. Ligature
The archwire is held to each bracket with a ligature, which can be either a tiny elastic or a twisted wire.

B. Archwire
The archwire is tied to all of the brackets and creates force to move teeth into proper alignment.

C. Brackets
Brackets are connected to the bands, or directly bonded on the teeth, and hold the archwire in place.

D. Metal Band
The band is the cemented ring of metal which wraps around the tooth.

E. Elastic Hooks & Rubber Bands
Elastic hooks are used for the attachment of rubber bands, which help move teeth toward their final position.

The following orthodontic emergencies and their treatments are listed in the order of the least severe to the most severe. Only the most severe emergencies will require immediate attention by the emergency out-of-hours dentists. The majority of these can be easily dealt with by yourself at home or your orthodontist at the next visit.

Food Caught Between Teeth



This can be a little uncomfortable or embarrassing for the patient. It is easily fixed with a piece of dental floss or use an interproximal brush or toothpick to dislodge food caught between teeth and braces.

Lost Wire or Elastics (Rubber) Ligature

Tiny rubber bands or small fine wires, known as ligatures, hold the wire to the bracket. If a rubber or wire ligature is lost or totally disengaged, notify your orthodontist who will advise whether you should be seen earlier or manage until the next scheduled visit.

Ligatures Come Off



If a rubber ligature should come off partially, you or your guardian may be able to put it back in place using clean tweezers. If a wire ligature comes loose, simply remove it with clean tweezers. If the wire ligature is sticking out into the lip but is not loose, it may be bent back down with a cotton bud or pencil eraser to eliminate the irritation.

Of course, when one ligature pops off or breaks, others may follow. Missing or broken ligatures should be brought to the attention of your orthodontist as soon as practically possible.

Discomfort



It is normal for a patient to have discomfort for a day or two after braces or retainers are adjusted; but it can make eating uncomfortable. This discomfort is both normal and temporary. Stick to soft foods. Rinse the mouth out with warm salt water or antiseptic mouthwash. If you have no contraindication for over-the-counter pain relief, these may be effective as long as you adhere to the manufacturer instructions.

Irritation of Lips or Cheeks



Sometimes new braces can be irritating to the mouth, especially when you are eating. A small amount of non-medicinal relief wax (Orthodontic Relief Wax) makes an excellent buffer between the brackets and mouth. Simply pinch off a small piece and roll it into a ball the size of a small pea. Flatten the ball and place it completely over the area of the braces causing irritation. You may then function more comfortably. If the wax is accidentally ingested it is not a problem. The wax is harmless. The red wax coating on 'Babybel' cheese works well in this situation.

Protruding Wire



Occasionally the end of a wire may work itself out of place and irritate your mouth.

In the first instance, try to use a suitable instrument like a cotton bud or pencil eraser to push the wire so that it is flat against the tooth. If the wire cannot be moved into a comfortable position, cover it with

Orthodontic Relief Wax. Your orthodontist should be notified as soon as practically possible.

In a situation where the wire is extremely bothersome and it is not relievable with the above measures, telephone our practice phone number where you will be given further instructions what to do. Bear in mind that any components dismantled by the emergency on-duty dentist can be and will be replaced by your orthodontist at a later date. Orthodontic Relief Wax may still be necessary to provide further comfort to the irritated area. Your orthodontist should be notified as soon as practically possible.

Loose Brackets, Wires or Bands



If the braces have come loose in any way, your orthodontist should be notified as soon as practically possible.

A Bracket is knocked off



Brackets are the parts of braces attached to teeth with a special adhesive. They are generally positioned in the centre of each tooth. The bracket can be knocked off if you have eaten one of those hard or crunchy foods you are instructed to avoid, or if the mouth is struck while at play. (A protective mouth guard should be worn while playing sports).

If the loose bracket has rotated on the wire and is sticking out, use Orthodontic Relief Wax to cover the offending component. Your orthodontist should be notified as soon as practically possible.

Other broken metal components (Transpalatal Arch or Fixed Functional Appliance)



These fixed components tend to be fixed onto multiple back teeth through metal bands. These bands are normally stuck in place with dental cement.

If the whole component has detached from patient's teeth, please leave it off and your orthodontist should be notified as soon as practically possible. Please keep the component safe and present it to the orthodontist at the next appointment.

If part of the component has become loose but stayed in place, contact your orthodontist as soon as practically possible during their opening hours.

If part of the component has become loose and dislodged, causing trauma to cheek/palate/tongue; or it is stopping you from biting your teeth together, you may need to be seen by the on-duty dentist to remove the whole component safely.

Piece of the appliance is swallowed or aspirated

If a piece of the appliance is swallowed, there should be no coughing or difficulty in breathing. Usually the conservative approach is taken and the piece is allowed to pass naturally. Your orthodontist should be notified as soon as practically possible.

Very rarely a piece of the appliance can be aspirated (caught in the airway). If you are coughing excessively or having difficulty breathing, the piece could have been aspirated. When this happens, you must remain calm.

If you are able to see the piece, you may carefully attempt to remove it; but do not make the attempt if you would cause harm.

If you are unable to see the piece and believe it may have been aspirated, you should attend an A&E Department for an x-ray to determine the location of the piece. A medical doctor will have to determine the best way to remove it if inhaled.

Trapped soft tissue onto fixed appliance following trauma

Occasionally after falls and being 'hit in the face', the lip or cheek may become embedded onto the fixed appliance; with patient complaining 'lip/cheek got stuck on the brace'. You need to be seen by the on-duty dentist to safely disengage the soft tissue from the brace. This could be done by administering appropriate Local Anaesthesia in order to disengage the soft tissue without discomfort. Stitches may be necessary under certain circumstances.

