INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS AND PARENTS OR CARERS

Your **fixed brace**

How to look after your teeth and brace

BELFAST ORTHODONTICS

What is **a fixed brace?**



A fixed brace is glued to your teeth, so you cannot take it out. It has:

- **Brackets** – small metal squares on each tooth.
- **A wire** – this joins the brackets and gently moves your teeth.
- **Small elastic rings** – these hold the wire in place. They can be coloured or clear.

We adjust your brace at your appointments.

The first **few days**

- **Aching:** your teeth will probably ache for 3 to 5 days, and again after each adjustment. You can take simple painkillers (always check with a parent and follow the instructions on the packet).
- **Sore spots:** the brace may rub your cheeks and lips at first. Rinsing with warm salt water helps.
- **Wax:** press a small piece of orthodontic wax over any part that rubs. This should give you relief for a few hours. Keep applying it until you come to the practice to get it fixed, so you are not in pain. We will show you how.
- Your teeth may feel a little loose while they move. This is normal.

Eating **and drinking**

- **Avoid hard, sticky and chewy foods**, such as toffees, chewing gum, hard sweets, crusty bread, nuts and popcorn. They can break your brace.
- Cut food into small pieces. Slice apples and raw carrots instead of biting into them.
- **Avoid fizzy drinks (even diet ones), sugary drinks and fruit juice.** Water and plain milk are best.
- Keep sugary foods to mealtimes.
- Do not bite your nails or chew pens.

Keeping your **teeth clean**

Food gets trapped around a brace. If you do not clean it away, you can get **permanent white marks and tooth decay** around the brackets.

- Brush **after every meal and before bed** with fluoride toothpaste. Do not rinse afterwards – this leaves fluoride on your teeth.
- Brush above and below the brackets and along the gums. Check each tooth in a mirror.
- Use small **interdental brushes** between the brackets and under the wire. A **single-tufted brush** helps with hard-to-reach places.
- Use a **fluoride mouthwash every day**, at a different time from brushing (for example, after lunch).
- Keep seeing your regular dentist for check-ups.

Clean teeth matter. If you do not keep your teeth clean, we may need to talk to you about stopping treatment early to protect them.

Elastics (only if we ask you to wear them)

- Small elastic bands hook onto your brace to help move your teeth or correct your bite.

- Wear them as we show you, **[when, e.g. all the time / at night only]**. Change them every day. Always carry spares.
- **If you do not wear them as instructed, we may not achieve an ideal outcome**, and treatment may take longer.
- **Broken hook?** Use the Broken brace form on our website. If we have asked you to wear elastics on both sides and a broken hook means you cannot wear them as instructed, stop wearing them on both sides until you next see us.

Sport and **musical instruments**

- Wear a **gumshield** for contact sports. Ask us about one that fits over your brace.
- Playing a wind or brass instrument may take time to get used to. Wax can help.

Problems and **what to do**

Problem	What to do
Wire poking or rubbing	Cover it with wax and contact us.
Ulcer or sore spot	Rinse with warm salt water and put wax on the part that rubs. Contact us if it does not get better in a few days.
Pain that does not settle	Contact us.
Something broken or loose	Sharp and causing pain? Call us. Otherwise, use the Broken brace form (Contact us > Broken brace) at belfastorthodontics.co.uk/broken-brace.html and we will get back to you.
Knock to the face or a broken tooth	Get urgent dental advice from your regular dentist, then let us know what they have advised.

Never try to repair your brace yourself, and keep coming to your appointments.

Your **appointments**

- We will usually see you **every 8 to 10 weeks** to check and adjust your brace.
- Treatment usually takes **around 18 to 24 months**. This varies from person to person.
- Missed appointments and breakages make treatment take longer. If you cannot come, tell us as soon as possible.
- **If you repeatedly miss appointments, we may have to stop your treatment early**, as brace treatment needs to be monitored closely.
- At your appointments you will be seen by members of our orthodontic team, including orthodontic therapists, our dentist with enhanced skills in orthodontics, Dr Méabh Maguire, and our specialist orthodontist.

After your brace comes off: **retainers**

- We will give you **retainers** to hold your teeth in their new position, and tell you how and when to wear them.
- **Retainers are essential.** Teeth move throughout your lifetime, especially in the first few months.

Possible risks **of treatment**

- **White marks and decay:** caused by plaque and sugar around the brackets. Clean carefully and cut down on sugar.
- **Sore or swollen gums:** gums that are not cleaned well can bleed and swell. Better brushing helps.
- **Root shortening:** roots often shorten very slightly as teeth move. This rarely causes problems. If you are at higher risk, we will talk to you about it.

Questions **or problems?**

Clinic name	Turk Dental Care	**Phone**	028 9045 1303
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Opening hours	Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (usually closed for lunch, 1pm to 2pm)		

Please have your name and date of birth ready when you contact us.