

We have all suddenly found ourselves in very challenging times. Firstly, the **Colchester Orthodontic Centre** team hope you and your families are managing to stay safe and well and that you're finding ways to cope with all that life is throwing at you. Secondly, we want to provide some information about your orthodontic treatment and how it may be affected by the enforced delay in progress over the coming weeks. At some stage the coronavirus pandemic will subside, and life will return to some form of 'normal'. Equally, your orthodontic treatment will be resolved, and fantastic outcomes will be achieved. There's just going to be a bit of a delay getting there! So, here are some Q&A's which hopefully will provide some helpful advice and guidance.

WHY HAVE MY APPOINTMENTS BEEN CANCELLED?

As orthodontic Specialists we take guidance on how our practice should function from the Governments Chief Dental Officer, NHS England, Public Health England, The British Dental Association, The British Orthodontic Society, The Local Area Health Team, The Local Dental Committee and others. All these bodies have instructed dental and orthodontic practices to stop seeing patients during the current stage of the coronavirus pandemic. This is for the safety of all and will be until further notice. We don't know how long these restrictions will be in place, but it seems likely it will be for a minimum of 3 months. We will be reviewing the guidance daily and will keep you informed of any changes via our website and Facebook page.

IF I HAVE A PROBLEM DURING THIS TIME WHAT DO I DO?

Give us a call! The **Colchester Orthodontic Centre** team will be on hand during this period of enforced shut down. A clinician will be available each day to advise you over the telephone. Just like the rest of the country, we have a need to socially distance and so a skeleton staff will be present daily. Fortunately, most orthodontic problems can be resolved over the telephone with advice and guidance. On the rare occasions when this is not possible, you may need to be referred to a Dental Hub Centre. These are currently being established locally to manage dental and orthodontic emergencies during the coronavirus crisis. We have one in Colchester. There will be strict criteria as to the type of problems that can be seen at these centres, but we can advise you.

WHAT IS AN ORTHODONTIC EMERGENCY?

Real orthodontic emergencies are rare and usually involve significant and increasing pain from severely damaged braces. Loose wires, loose brackets, lost elastics, discoloured elastic chain, loose removable braces, broken removable braces, lost Invisalign attachments, lost retainers, broken bonded retainers, are not emergencies. All these problems can usually be managed with advice over the telephone. Cheek or gum trauma from long wires can be uncomfortable but can also be managed with appropriate advice. However, please let us know if you are concerned about anything that you feel is different or uncomfortable. We can check your clinical notes and advise on how issues can be managed. We may ask you to send in photos of your teeth and braces to help us give the best advice.

IF MY FIXED BRACES ARE UNATTENDED FOR 3 MONTHS OR LONGER, WILL THEY DAMAGE MY TEETH?

Braces have an active period when they are exerting most influence on your teeth. This is usually in the first 1-12 weeks following brace fitting or after each adjustment. After this period, they become passive. They are then simply holding your teeth in the position they've reached. Keeping your braces in position for an extended period of time won't damage your teeth. It simply slows progress. However, you keep your braces as clean as possible at all times and stay away from hard, chewy and sugary foods/drinks. If your brace is not kept clean, plaque and sugar will build up around the braces and cause enamel damage which can result in long term unsightly staining of enamel and gum inflammation issues.

IF MY INVISALIGN BRACES ARE UNATTENDED FOR 3 MONTHS OR LONGER, WILL THEY DAMAGE MY TEETH?

Invisalign braces work in a similar way to fixed braces in that they put pressure on teeth to move them. However, they differ in that each aligner becomes passive after 2 weeks. Once you are wearing the last aligners provided and have no more at home, we advise that you give the practice a call. Your Invisalign plan may allow us to provide you with more aligners so that your treatment can remain active. These can be sent to you or we can arrange for you to pick them up. If, however the next aligners need interproximal reduction (IPR) before being fitted or multiple new attachments, then it will not be advisable to issue further aligners. IPR is needed to create space to allow teeth to move. If it's not carried out at the required stage, the next aligners will feel too tight and will be ineffective. If multiple attachments are needed, the aligners will feel loose and will be ineffective. In these cases, we advise that you continue with your existing aligners. If they are becoming a bit too stained and 'tired' then its ok just to wear them in bed at night. They will simply be acting as 'retainers' to hold your teeth in their current position. Providing you keep your teeth very clean; they won't be causing any damage.

WILL THIS DELAY AFFECT MY TREATMENT OUTCOMES?

The short answer is possibly but unlikely. When we plan your treatment, we are looking at two essential objectives: the overall cosmetic appearance and the eventual fit of the upper and lower teeth when biting. An enforced prolonged delay in the treatment process is very unlikely to affect the cosmetic outcome. We feel confident that your teeth will still look fantastic at the end. For the more complex cases, which may have involved extractions or complex tooth movements, then it's possible that the fit of the teeth may not be as perfect as we'd like. This however is unlikely to be something that you are aware of and is more of a technical issue which orthodontists fret over rather than patients!

DO I KEEP WEARING MY ELASTIC BANDS OR TURNING THE SCREW IN MY PLASTIC REMOVABLE BRACE?

This will depend on the stage of your treatment. It may be beneficial to keep doing so or alternatively to stop. Give us a call on **01206 756210** and we can advise you.

I'M PAYING FOR MY TREATMENT. WILL THIS DELAY INCREASE THE TREATMENT COSTS?

No!

I JUST WANT REASSURANCE THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE OK WITH MY TEETH; CAN I TALK TO THE ORTHODONTIST?

Yes, we encourage you to do so. A clinician will be present during normal surgery working hours every day. Please call the practice on **01206 756210** and we can go through your treatment plan and provide an update on where you are and how we see things progressing. We will also be posting updates and advice on our Facebook page and website:

www.colchesterorthodontics.co.uk

We look forward to seeing you again soon and getting your orthodontic treatment back on track.

Best wishes,

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