

Headgear

Your orthodontist has suggested that you need to headgear. You may have some questions you would like answered.

➤ What is headgear?

It is an appliance that can be attached to your top back teeth. It has either a neck strap, head cap or both which connect to a metal bow (face bow) which can be fitted into either a fixed or removable brace.

➤ Why do I wear headgear?

It is worn to either move the back teeth backwards to make more space, or to stop them moving forward whilst the front teeth are being straightened. It may avoid the need for tooth extractions in some cases.

➤ How long will I wear headgear for?

This may vary from 8-14 hours per day although this does not need to be continuous. You need to follow your orthodontist's instructions. However, wearing headgear every day, if possible, is the key to success. The length of time headgear is worn during orthodontic treatment also varies from a few months up to the total length of the treatment.

➤ Will I need another brace?

You may be asked to wear a removable brace with headgear. It is also likely that you will have a fixed brace to straighten your teeth either at the same time as the headgear or at a later stage

➤ Will headgear be painful?

Your teeth may be sore for 3-5 days after the headgear is fitted and may feel slightly wobbly. If painful, simple painkillers such as those you would normally take for a headache should be used- please follow instructions on the packet. The face bow and neck strap can rub at first but this should only last a few days. Tell your orthodontist if the headgear is rubbing so it can be adjusted if necessary.

➤ Are there any special instructions?

YES. Safety is most important, especially when putting the headgear on and taking it off. Your orthodontist will show you how to fit and remove headgear. You must follow these instructions carefully.

- Very rarely, eye injuries have occurred whilst wearing headgear. If this should happen, it must be treated as a medical emergency. Attend your local accident and emergency department immediately.
- Always remove your headgear straps before the face bow.
- Never remove or fit the headgear in one piece by pulling it over your face/head.
- Do not wear it when playing contact sports or during rough play.
- Always ensure that the safety mechanism(s) of the headgear and face bow are in place to prevent accidental removal.
- If any part of your headgear comes off during sleep, stop wearing the headgear and ring up your orthodontist for an appointment as soon as is reasonably possible. Do not wait for your next routine appointment.
- Bring your headgear to every appointment and tell your orthodontist if there are any problems.
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➤ What about tooth brushing?

You should remove the headgear to brush your teeth. It is important that you brush your teeth for at least 3 minutes, twice a day. Use a fluoride toothpaste. If possible, carry a brush with you for use after lunch. To further protect the teeth use an alcohol-free fluoride mouth rinse daily at a different time to when you brush your teeth. Avoid eating or rinsing for 20 minutes after use. Sugary snacks/ drinks and poor cleaning of your teeth and appliance will lead to permanent damage to your teeth.

➤ Can I eat with the headgear on?

NO. You will need to remove your headgear at meal times,

➤ How often do I need an appointment?

You will need regular appointments about every 6-8 weeks to review the progress of your headgear

➤ Do I still need to see my regular dentist?

Yes. It will be important for you to continue to have check-ups with your regular dentist throughout orthodontic treatment so that your teeth can be checked for decay.

➤ What should I do if there is any problem with the headgear?

YOU SHOULD STOP WEARING THE HEADGEAR IMMEDIATELY.

Ring up your orthodontist for an appointment as soon as is reasonably possible. Do not wait for your next routine appointment.

➤ REMEMBER

- The more you wear your headgear, the better the result will be.
- Follow the instructions from your orthodontist for putting on and removing the headgear
- Contact your orthodontist as soon as is reasonably possible if the headgear is broken or comes off at night.
- Brush your teeth for 3 minutes as least twice each day.