

Practice Newsletter

November 2009 - Miller's Smile Post

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In this Newsletter:

What could keep me from getting my braces off on time?

By Stacy Miller, DDS, MS

What could keep me from getting my braces off by my original estimated completion date? Many factors can come into play, some are under your control and some are not.

I carefully estimate how long I expect it will take for your case to be completed based upon your unique situation. It's called an 'estimate' because orthodontic treatment time must be based not only on what needs to be accomplished, but on 'typical' rates of tooth eruption, movement, and growth. These factors are called a 'biologic response'. If your teeth move slowly, or projected growth varies, this could mean that you are in treatment longer than estimated. In these instances, neither you nor the orthodontist can make Mother Nature change gears. Now let's discuss the factors that you can control.

Factors that **YOU** control:

- Keeping your teeth and gums clean—teeth cannot move as efficiently through thick, puffy, inflamed gums.
- Not breaking your braces or bending your wires—follow the rules of foods to avoid. Even though you may think you had something hard or sticky and nothing was damaged, the wire may have become bent or displaced and this moves your teeth in ways we don't want them to go. Remember: the same people who tell you 'oh I eat all the stuff they say not to' are probably the same ones who are so disappointed that their braces did not come off by their original completion date!
- Compliance—if a device such as rubber bands are recommended they must be worn as advised. **50% of**

Side Note

Orthodontic Emergencies



What to do in case of emergency

Call our office as soon as possible if you break or loosen any of your appliances. Please do not come directly to the office – by calling us, you will allow us to create a time to see you. Even if you have a...

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recommended wear time does not mean that your teeth will eventually move where we want them to, it means they won't get there at all! Don't give yourself any less than you deserve: perfection.

- Timely completion of other recommended dental procedures—once a recommendation is made for dental treatment and a time line is given, follow through. For instance if an oral surgeon needs to be seen to expose (uncover) an impacted (stuck) tooth, making and keeping such an appointment when advised to do so will keep things moving on time.
- Kept/On-time appointments—I make your next appointment time based on what is happening in your mouth at that time during your treatment. Appointments will not always be 4 weeks apart, or 6, or 8 but will vary over the course of treatment. **Missing appointments means getting off of the recommended treatment plan.** Being late to your appointment means that you may not get all the time and attention that was specifically reserved for you, or someone else would have to be shortchanged on their scheduled time. We are committed to not compromising our patient's care, so when this happens we must reschedule the late patient.

Timely treatment and outstanding results require cooperation. We are committed to you and your smile! In your orthodontics and in life:

Effort = Results

Most Commonly Treated Orthodontic Problems

All orthodontic conditions are as unique and varied as the patients involved, but there are some problems seen more frequently than others. These, too, vary with the patient base. For example, the most common problems for adults are different from those of children. The most common problems can also vary from one ethnic group to another, because many orthodontic problems are hereditary.

For children, the most common orthodontic problems are poor alignment of teeth due to crowding and protrusion of the upper front teeth ahead of the lower teeth (frequently called 'buck teeth') due to the lower jaw being shorter than the upper jaw.

The main cause of crowding stems from teeth being larger than the amount of space available in the mouth. The causes for protrusion of the upper jaw can vary from patient to patient and include genetic growth patterns, thumb sucking, tongue thrusting, airway obstructions that cause the child to breathe through the mouth and abnormal eruption of permanent teeth due to loss of baby teeth.

For adults, the most common treatments include correcting crowding or crooked teeth, closing spaces (old or new) between teeth, and correcting the position and alignment of teeth. Even when adult orthodontic problems are the same as those of children, the treatment is different because there is no jaw growth in adults, so problems that could be easily managed in a growing child (such as an upper jaw protrusion) may require surgery in an adult. Adults are also more likely to have gum or bone loss due to periodontal disease and worn, damaged or missing teeth.

Some of the more common orthodontic conditions and the complications they can cause include:

- Overjet (protruded front teeth) - Unattractive and prone to damage
- Crowded Teeth - Unattractive, difficult to clean, bone damage and gum recession
- Underbite (lower front teeth protrude beyond the upper teeth) - Unattractive and uneven wear of the front teeth
- Deepbite (upper front teeth cover the lower teeth) - Excessive wear of the front teeth and gum and bone damage behind the upper front teeth
- Openbite (upper and lower teeth don't meet in front) - Eating problems, speech problems, and excessive wear of those teeth which do meet; unattractive
- Crossbite (upper jaw is too narrow, so lower jaw swings to one side to allow the teeth to mesh) - Biting and chewing difficulties
- Spacing (missing teeth or wide dental arch and small teeth) - Unattractive and allows teeth to shift out of position

Whatever the orthodontic problem, the goal of all orthodontic treatment is to produce a healthy, well-functioning, stable bite. An attractive smile is a pleasant, esteem-lifting, important side effect.

Orthodontic Emergencies

What to do in case of emergency

Call our office as soon as possible if you break or loosen any of your appliances. Please do not come directly to the office – by calling us, you will allow us to create a time to see you. Even if you have a regular appointment scheduled, call us immediately to notify us if you need an appliance repaired.



Loose brackets or bands

Call our office immediately for advice if a bracket or wire is loosened. The bracket may need to be re-fitted as soon as possible. You may have a situation that requires cutting a wire or sliding a bracket off a wire at night or over the weekend. If you need to cut a wire in case of emergency, you may use fingernail clippers that have been washed and sterilized in alcohol. Please call our office the next business day, so that we may schedule an appointment for you.

Wire irritations

Sometimes discomfort caused by a wire on your braces can be resolved by moving the wire away from the irritated area with a cotton swab or eraser. If the wire will not move, try covering the end of it with a small piece of cotton or a small amount of wax. If the wire is painful, you can cut it with nail clippers or scissors that have been washed and sterilized in alcohol. If you cannot resolve the wire irritation, call our office for an appointment.

Lost separators

Most patients lose a separator during their treatment. Do not worry about losing a separator, but call our office to see if it needs to be replaced.

Discomfort with Orthodontic Treatment

During the first week after your braces are in place and routine adjustments are complete, you will likely feel some pain, soreness or discomfort. You may take acetaminophen or other non-aspirin pain relievers while you adjust to your new braces. A warm wash cloth or heating pad may reduce the soreness in your jaws.

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