

Elastics Instructions

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information on the elastics that I have asked you to wear.

1. The purpose of the elastics is to provide forces between the teeth. Usually the elastics are worn between the top and bottom teeth to correct your bite. Sometimes, I ask you to wear them to counteract a side-effect force from something else that I am doing. In these situations, if you do not wear them as I have instructed, you will not only not make progress, but also your teeth may move in a direction that I can not recover from. I am assuming that you will cooperate 100% with wearing the elastics as I have instructed when I place forces on your teeth. You may not “take a break” from them, since this may irreversibly negatively affect the outcome of your treatment.
2. Unless I specifically ask you otherwise, the elastics are to be worn all day and all night (this is what I mean when I ask you to wear them “all the time”). You will make progress in your treatment only if you wear them all the time. For the average person, it takes 6-10 hours of pressure for the bone moving cells to start allowing the teeth to move. If you stop wearing them for even an hour or so, it takes another 6-10 hours for the teeth to start moving again. So anything less than full time wear is doing nothing to make the teeth move.
3. Your teeth will likely be sore for the first few days that you are wearing the elastics. After the teeth start to move, the soreness will go away and you should get used to them to the point where they don’t even feel like they are doing anything (this usually takes a few days). If you stop wearing them because they hurt, then try again a second time, it will hurt as much the second time as it did the first. Some people say that they don’t want to wear the elastics because they hurt every time they start wearing them. Take headache medicine if it hurts, and it will feel better in a few days. If you repeatedly start and stop you will never get used to them and it will always hurt.
4. We will have you demonstrate putting the elastics on and removing them before you leave. Make sure you are clear as to where the elastics connect before you leave. If you have any question about where they hook on, ask us.
5. The elastics break frequently. They are made of latex and this material wears quickly against the braces. Keep a bag with you at all times so if they break you can replace them right away.
6. Change them at least every 12 hours, even if they do not break. After 12 hours, the elastic wears out enough that it is no longer providing an effective force level.
7. For some people, the elastics bother their cheeks or lips. If you find this happening, you can try twisting the elastic before hooking it on the second hook so that it makes an “X”.
8. Some people also find that the corners of their mouth become irritated because they have more saliva while wearing the elastics and the saliva accumulates at the corners of their mouths. If this happens to you, try putting Vaseline on the irritated areas, or puncture a vitamin E pill with a pin and put a drop of the liquid on the areas.
9. If you lose the elastics, or are close to running out and you can’t get to my office to get more, call me and I will send you more in the mail.
10. I will usually ask you if you have enough elastics at each visit. If I forget and you are running low, please ask us for more.
11. If I do not ask you about the elastics at a visit, this does not mean that I want you to stop wearing them. Keep wearing the elastics until I tell you to stop.
12. You can take them off when you eat or are playing sports that require a mouth guard. It is your responsibility to remember to put them back in when you are done. In general, though, I would prefer that you leave them in, even when you eat.
13. If you would like to stop wearing them for a special occasion, call me first so I can determine if not wearing them will cause any harm.