

Orthodontic Emergency Care

This hand-out is devoted to helping you take the proper action if you have problems with your braces. It is important for our patients to recognize the difference between major orthodontic emergencies (which may require immediate care) and minor orthodontic problems (which generally do not require immediate care and can be solved when it is convenient to return to our office). If you need to schedule an orthodontic repair appointment please contact our office at 512-258-9007.

Direct Injury to Mouth or Teeth: Following a direct injury to the mouth or teeth, whether undergoing orthodontic care or not, you should be seen by your family dentist as soon as possible.

Minor Orthodontic Emergencies: As you can see there are very few true orthodontic emergencies. However, during the course of treatment you may discover that you have loose or broken braces. You may also notice that the orthodontic wires may shift and begin irritating your lips or cheeks. On our web site we have a variety of ways you can correct these problems at home. If you have a problem that you cannot resolve on your own, call our office. We will be able to give you advice on how to solve the problem yourself or schedule you the appropriate appointment so that your problem can be fixed. You can also view our braces problems video for more demonstrations on how to correct common problems.

Loose or Broken Braces: You may discover that you have loose or broken braces. This is usually caused by playing with your braces or eating hard or sticky foods. This is generally not an emergency unless it is associated with pain or discomfort. If the bracket is attached to the wire, leave it in place and cover it with wax as needed for comfort. If the bracket comes out completely, bring it with you to your next appointment. Avoid connecting elastics or a headgear appliance to any loose brackets. Call the office to schedule an appointment to repair the bracket.

Loose Band: Eating hard or sticky foods or playing with your orthodontic braces can loosen a band. This is generally not an emergency unless it is associated with pain or discomfort. Avoid connecting elastics or a headgear appliance to any loose bands. If the band is still attached to the wire, it will usually wobble slightly. You can call the office to see if you need a special appointment to have the band recemented or if it can be done at your regularly scheduled appointment time.

Long Poking Archwire: Sometimes as your teeth shift, the ends of the wire will start poking out of the back of the molar tubes and begin irritating the cheeks. This problem may be resolved by moving the wire away from the irritated area using a cotton swab or pencil eraser. You may try cutting the wire with nail clippers that have been washed and sterilized in alcohol. Call the office for an appointment if you cannot resolve the problem.

Tooth Discomfort and Sores or Ulcerations Inside the Mouth: During the first week of treatment, you may notice generalized soreness in your mouth and your teeth may be tender to biting pressure. This can happen because your lips and cheeks are not yet used to rubbing against your braces. This can be relieved by rinsing your mouth with a warm salt-water mouthwash. If the tenderness is severe, take aspirin or whatever you normally take for headache or similar pain. Also, you can place a small pea-sized amount of wax or cotton on the area of the braces that is causing the sore or ulceration.

Wire Out of Tube or Slot: During treatment, flexible wires may slip out of the bracket slots of the back teeth. This may be avoided by eating appropriate foods. If the wire comes out of the tube, try placing the wire back in the tube using tweezers. If necessary, cover the loose wire with wax and call the office for an appointment.

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