

Headgear

Information Guide

WHAT IS A HEADGEAR?

A headgear is an appliance that is attached to your top back teeth. It has either a neck strap, head cap or both which connect to a metal bow (facebow) which is then be fitted into a fixed metal plate or metal bands in the mouth.

It is worn to either:

- Hold the upper teeth and jaw back during a growth phase to reduce protrusion of the upper front teeth;
- Move the back teeth backwards to make more space; or
- To stop the back teeth moving forward whilst the front teeth are being straightened. It may avoid the need for tooth extractions in some cases.



HOW LONG WILL THE TREATMENT TAKE?

A headgear is usually worn for a period of 12-18 months, or until the desired result is achieved. It must be worn for 12-14 hours a day, whenever at home. The more it is worn, the quicker and more effective the treatment will be.

WILL I STILL NEED BRACES?

Most children who have a headgear will go on to have braces or clear aligners at a later date. A headgear can only improve the position of the jaw and upper teeth protrusion. Braces or aligners are needed to straighten rotated, crooked or spaced teeth.



APPOINTMENT SCHEDULE

A couple of appointments are required to make and fully insert the headgear.

Appointment 1: Separators (5 mins) or Intra-oral Scan

Small rubber rings, called separators, are placed adjacent to the upper molar teeth to make space for the bands. They should remain there until the next appointment.

If you require a fixed metal plate, separators are not placed. Instead a 3-D digital scan is taken of the teeth and forwarded to a local laboratory where the plate is made with a combination of 3-D printing and traditional laboratory techniques.

Appointment 2: Inserting the Fixed Plate and Starting the Headgear (30 mins)

The separators are removed (if previously needed), the teeth polished and the upper metal fixed plate or metal bands are cemented to the teeth with a dental adhesive. You will be shown how to attach the facebow to the fixed plate or metal bands as well as how tight to make the headgear. Care instructions are also given.

Follow ups are scheduled every 8-10 weeks. The headgear is worn every night for approximately 12 months or until the desired result is achieved.

ADJUSTING TO LIFE WITH A HEADGEAR

With any new appliance, there is a period of adaptation. If you require a fixed metal plate, it can be challenging to talk, eat and drink, but with practice improves rapidly.

There is usually some discomfort for the first few days after the headgear has been fitted and this can comprise of discomfort and occasionally some tenderness in the teeth the appliance attaches to. Some people may also temporarily develop mouth ulcers. Mild pain relieving medication can be taken, if required.

Sweet and acidic food and drinks are best avoided, as they can damage the teeth. It is also important to avoid eating sticky foods, as they can cause the fixed metal plate or bands to become loose.

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