

## **EMERGENCIES**

There are guidelines as to what is an orthodontic emergency. Broken or lost retainers, pokey wires, broken brackets and broken bonded (permanent) retainers can be uncomfortable and can cause unwanted changes to your teeth. Anything causing pain or discomfort, causing unexpected change to one or more teeth, infections or serious injuries are true emergencies and should all be seen as soon as possible. If you have an orthodontic emergency please call our office at (360) 692-3030. If it is after our regular business hours our answering service will assist you.

**The following is a list of both emergency and non-emergency orthodontic issues and how to proceed to correct them:**

### **FOR PATIENTS IN BRACES**

If you haven't been following the recommendations for taking care of your braces up to this point, now would be a great time to start. Do everything you can to prevent things from breaking so that you don't have to worry about what to do with a broken bracket or wire. Your comfort is more important than the braces themselves. In general, if there is something you need to do to make yourself comfortable that includes removing or cutting something, we recommended doing it and having it fixed later. Pokey wires or brackets. Most pokey wires are small and can be made more comfortable by placing wax over the sharp part of the wire or bracket. Roll the wax into a small ball, dry the area to be covered as best you can before lightly pushing the wax into place. We normally supply wax to our patients, but while our offices are closed you can purchase orthodontic wax from Rite Aid, Walgreens, or other pharmacies. Wax can also be ordered online through Amazon.com.

Small pokey wire on a bracket. Some brackets are tied into the main wire with a smaller wire that is twisted to tighten around the bracket. The twisted ends can sometimes bend outward and poke the cheek or lip. This kind of pokey wire can be pushed in towards the tooth with the eraser end of a pencil.

Broken brackets and long wires. Most brackets that break off of the teeth can be left off until your next appointment. However, sometimes losing a bracket means that a large section of wire is left to scratch and scrape the inside of your cheek. Any long wires can be cut by using nail clippers or wire cutting pliers. If you can see the wire to be cut and have enough room to access it cut the wire and remove any loose pieces from the mouth.

Large sores, cuts or infections. If a cut or sore is being caused by a pokey wire as described above, it should resolve itself after following the steps above. If it does not resolve or if you have a particularly large cut or sore please call us to set up an emergency appointment. True infections that you feel are being caused by orthodontic appliances should also be seen as soon as possible. Signs of infections can include swelling, pus, and redness. Dental infections that are not related to the orthodontic appliances should be seen by your general dentist.

Unusual pain or discomfort. Most patients know that they can expect a certain amount of discomfort during orthodontic treatment. This discomfort can change in location and severity throughout their time in orthodontics. It is also important to note that during these times in particular most people will have a higher amount of stress which can lead to clenching and grinding, causing more pain in their teeth and jaws. However, if you have a severe and unusual amount of pain please call us.

## FOR PATIENTS WITH EXPANDERS

It is important to stop turning your expander once the correct number of turns is reached. Usually this coordinates with your next appointment. If

you don't remember the exact number of turns you have done or if you don't remember how many turns to do, use the following guidelines:

- Stop turning if you think you are close to the correct amount
- Stop turning if the date of your scheduled appointment has already come and gone
- Stop turning if you have any concerns due to pain or discomfort

Once things are back to normal we will evaluate the amount of expansion done and determine if more turns are needed. It is very normal to have some amount of discomfort when using an expander. Also, it is not unusual to have some sore teeth, especially the upper molars. If there is an unusual amount of pain or if an expander is loose or broken please call.

Elastics. Unless you have been instructed otherwise or have been told that you will be in elastics for a long time, we recommend you wear your elastics only until the date of your next appointment, even if that appointment has been canceled. If anything has broken that prevents you from wearing the elastics then you will have to stop wearing them until we can see you again.

## FOR PATIENTS IN RETAINERS

Under normal circumstances we consider a broken or lost retainer to be very important but do not to consider this to be emergencies. An exception to this is if a broken bonded (permanent) retainer is creating significant pain or damage to your teeth or gums. If this is the case please call us. Please take care of your retainers and remember to wash your hands before putting them in your mouth. Contact our office during regular hours to arrange repair or replacement.