

INVISALIGN TREATMENT



Everything you need to know

Congratulations on starting your journey toward an awesome new smile with Invisalign – the most advanced clear aligner system in the world! Through a combination of careful planning and monitoring (that’s our job) and great patient cooperation (that’s your job), we can achieve the smile of your dreams without the hassle of braces and in significantly less time than braces would normally require! So here’s everything you need to know as we get started with your Invisalign treatment.

ATTACHMENTS: At the start of your treatment, we usually place a series of small plastic “bumps” called “attachments” on the front of certain teeth. These allow the aligners to “grab” the teeth more tightly, resulting in more precise and more efficient tooth movement. While they may take a little getting used to at first, they are small and are rarely uncomfortable. They are also tooth colored and not very noticeable – certainly much less noticeable than braces. Just keep in mind that these attachments are very instrumental in giving you the best result possible in the fastest amount of time and, of course, they will all be removed at the end of your treatment. Note that if you ever have an attachment come off or break, simply let us know; depending upon its location and function, we will decide if it needs to be replaced.

ALIGNERS: Taking your aligners on and off may seem tricky at first, but once you’ve done it a few times and figured out the “combination”, this will become second nature to you. Your teeth will likely get a bit sore/tender for the first few days after starting each new aligner and this is perfectly normal. Also, should you ever forget which aligner you are on, each one is marked with a “U” for upper or an “L” for lower followed by the actual aligner number. At each appointment, beginning with this first one, you will be given a certain number of aligners (usually 3 to 5) to wear before your next appointment. Your appointments will usually be 6-10 weeks apart.

TWENTY-TWO HOUR WEAR!!!! In order to fully realize all the wonderful advantages that Invisalign offers over traditional braces, you must wear your aligners the vast majority of the time. We basically “give” you two hours a day to eat, drink and brush without the aligners in but the rest of the time (approximately 22 hours) we expect (and need) you to wear them! Failing to wear your aligners this much on a regular basis can significantly and adversely affect your result.

CHANGE ALIGNERS EVERY TWO WEEKS: You may hear of some other patients changing their aligners weekly and, in certain situations, we will suggest weekly changes as well. However, for the vast majority of our cases, we still recommend changing aligners every two weeks. The goal is to get each aligner fitting as well as it could possibly ever fit and this can sometimes take a full two weeks to achieve. But even more importantly, your teeth need time to heal each time they are moved to prevent unwanted damage to the roots and/or the surrounding bone. We feel that two-week interval wear gives us the best and safest overall result for our patients – and most of our patients still finish much faster than they would have with traditional braces!

STAYING ON TRACK: As a general rule, we try to schedule your appointments to coincide with the next aligner change based on the 2-week interval plan. For example, if we give you 4 aligners, we typically will plan to see you in 8 weeks. But life happens and



despite our best efforts this schedule can sometimes get interrupted. For example, if you have a particularly hard week – perhaps due to being sick – and you know your aligner wear has been spotty, simply stay on that aligner an extra week. Remember that the goal is to get each aligner fitting perfectly before moving on – even if it takes longer. Changing your aligners too fast will come back to haunt you in the end – leading to a less than ideal result and/or increasing your treatment time!

So there may be times when you come in for more aligners and are not quite ready to change, and that's ok – we'll just adjust the number of new aligners given as needed. Likewise, if you have to reschedule an appointment, there may be times when you'll have to stay on a "good fitting" aligner longer than the normal two weeks, and that's ok too!

CLENCHING AND GRINDING CAN ACTUALLY BE A GOOD THING! This will likely be the only time you'll ever hear this from a dentist. But yes, people who naturally clench and grind their teeth actually have an advantage when it comes to Invisalign treatment as this helps to "seat" the aligners all the way, allowing for the best and most efficient tooth movement. For this reason, we encourage all of our Invisalign patients to "bite into their aligners" – especially during the first few days of each new aligner. We can even give you "bite sticks" to use to help seat the aligners in problem areas where you may be seeing "air gaps". But with all that being said, please use discretion and common sense with this idea and don't overdo it. You should avoid biting/clenching to the point that it starts to cause any discomfort in your jaw joints.

SO WHAT ARE "AIR GAPS"? Air gaps occur when the teeth do not track all the way and are not fitting all the way into the aligners. In other words, teeth with air gaps are not "following the plastic" completely and consequently are not moving as intended. This is most often due to inadequate wear. If you are still seeing air gap(s) after two weeks of wear, stay on that aligner an extra week or more and make sure you wear them 22+ hours. You can also use the "bite sticks" to help fully seat the aligners in the air gap area(s).

LOST ALIGNERS? As a general rule, if you lose an aligner after being on it for a week or more, simply move to the next aligner. But if you lose an aligner soon after starting it, it's probably best to go back to the previous aligner and let us reorder the one you lost. We can usually get the new aligner in a week or less. We recommend saving all of your worn aligners, but, at the very least, always save the previous set for this reason.

CLEANING YOUR ALIGNERS: Clean your aligners by brushing them with toothpaste and/or soaking them in Efferdent for 10-15 minutes. Do not use hot or even warm water.

SUGER-FREE MINTS HELP WITH MOUTH DRYNESS AND BAD BREATH: We recommend "Movemints" (can be found on Amazon) but most sugar-free mints will work!

RETAINERS OR REFINEMENT? Once you've finished your last aligner, we will need to determine if we have achieved the excellent result that we are seeking. If both you and Dr. Lowe agree that we have, we will schedule an appointment to remove your attachments and make your actual retainers. However, because the "plastic is not always perfect" (and sometimes neither is the patient!) we may elect to do a "refinement" scan and make more aligners for you to fine-tune your result. Refinement will usually require significantly fewer aligners than your initial treatment and, in most cases, the refinement cost is already included in your initial fee.

