

Take care of your retainer – you want it to last a long time

Your orthodontic treatment doesn't end when your braces are removed. No matter what type of braces you have – Invisalign or metal wires – you will need a retainer to keep your new smile beautiful. [dental-retainer-care-tips](#)

Here we will talk about caring for your retainer so it will last the rest of your life – or at least many years. Because it is removable, you will need to make a little extra effort to keep it clean and safe.

Clean your retainer regularly: Retainers are exposed to the same bacteria and plaque as the rest of your mouth. If not properly cared for, they can harbor germs and create unpleasant odors. Like your teeth, they need to be cleaned – at least rinsed – after every meal. Clean them as you would your teeth, with a soft brush. Some retainers can be brushed with a gentle toothpaste, but some cannot so make sure you check with your dentist. To keep your retainer germ-free and fresh, soak it in a cleanser made for this purpose. Alcohol-free mouthwash or a denture-cleaning agent can be effective, too. Ask your dentist for a recommendation.

Don't lose your retainer: This may seem obvious, but with a removable appliance, it's easy to do! Whenever your retainer isn't in your mouth, keep it in its case in a secure place. Many retainers are lost or damaged because they were left in a pocket or on a lunch tray. Others are lost or destroyed when curious animals or small children decide to inspect one that is sitting out.

Don't wrap your retainer in a tissue or napkin: The fibers can stick to the appliance, making it difficult to clean. Plus, if it's on your lunch tray, you can too easily toss it out with the trash.

Protect your retainer from damage: Retainers are mostly plastic, and the two most common ways they can be damaged are from heat and from dryness. Don't put your retainer in hot water, the dishwasher, a washing machine, direct sunlight or near a heat source – it can easily warp. And don't let it get too dry – the plastic can crack. To keep it from cracking, soak your retainer when it isn't in your mouth.

Be careful when inserting and removing the retainer: Some people like to flip the retainer with their tongue, an easy way to break it. Another tip: Don't bend the wires or your retainer will not fit properly.

After spending time and money straightening your teeth, don't neglect the final step! Wearing your retainer as your orthodontist instructs will ensure you keep that beautiful smile for the rest of your life.