

# Retainer Instruction Guide - Essix

## **Wear Schedule**

**0-6 months:** Day and Night, meaning "Full Time."

**6-18 months:** 12 hours per day, no less.

**18-30 months:** Every night to bed.

**30 months and beyond:**

5 or more nights per week to bed indefinitely. Replace quickly if lost, worn out, or if too much buildup of gunk.

Congratulations! You begin an important phase of your orthodontic treatment... **RETENTION.** Over the past months, your teeth have moved a considerable distance and are not yet firm. Your orthodontic retainers have been carefully designed to hold your teeth in their new positions. They are your best guarantee that your teeth will stay straight. This period is an essential part of your treatment.

The most common question we are asked is, "How long do I need to wear my retainers?" The honest answer is, "As long as you want to have straight teeth." For the first 6 months after your braces are removed, you will wear the retainer full time, depending on Dr. Lundner's instructions. For the following 12 months you will wear it 12 hours every day (from after dinner until the next morning), then for the following 12 months every night to bed. If you forget to wear it an evening then wear it the entire next day. After that we recommend you wear it most evenings to bed on an indefinite basis, with a minimum of 5 evenings per week. Our bodies constantly change as we age, and teeth are no different. Dr. Lundner moved your teeth into alignment, but the muscular and dental factors that caused them to be crooked in the first place are still present. These factors will once again try to shift your teeth. To maintain a slim waistline a person needs to exercise. In the same way, think of your retainers as exercise for your teeth to keep them straight.



## **When to Wear**

Wear your retainers full time, unless the doctor instructs otherwise. This means day and night. Your wear schedule is at the top of this page. For young children the doctor may ask for them to be worn whenever at home as they could easily be lost in school. When the braces have just been removed, it is not enough to only wear the retainers to bed. At 6 months after the braces have been removed, the doctor will decrease the amount of time you need to wear your retainers based on the schedule in the top corner of this page.

Do not flick the retainers in and out with your tongue, over and over. It will stress the material and it will either break or not fit as well.

## **How to Insert**

Insert with finger pressure. Make sure it is fully seated over the teeth. Do not bite on it unless you are certain it is about fully seated. Biting down hard on a partially seated retainer could damage it.

## **How to Remove**

Remove the upper retainer by pulling down on the inner (tongue side) edges in the back corners to loosen each side, then remove the entire retainer in a downward direction. Remove the lower retainer by pulling up from the outer (cheek side) edges in the back corners to loosen each side, then remove the entire retainer in an upward direction. Do NOT remove from one corner in a peeling motion across, as that will stress the center of the retainer and it will eventually crack in the middle or near the canine teeth. Do NOT try to simply remove the retainer by grasping it near the front teeth or canines. This will cause the plastic to tear.

## **When to Remove**

Take your retainers out when eating.

If you are going to a friend for one evening or on a one day trip, don't take your retainers as it's too easy to lose them in those situations. Just make sure to wear them as soon as you return.

### *How to Keep Your Retainers Clean*

Clean retainers thoroughly once a day with a toothbrush and water. Brushing retainers removes the plaque, and eliminates odors. Efferdent or other orthodontic appliance cleaners can be used, but do not take the place of brushing. Avoid using whitening toothpastes as they are abrasive and can dull the finish of the retainer. If you find that Efferdent and brushing are not enough, there are specialized products for keeping retainers clean available for purchase on the internet. Two popular products are SonicBrite and Retainer Brite. Some patients are allergic to retainer cleansers, especially those with phosphate allergies.

### *How to Store When Not in Your Mouth*

When retainers are not in your mouth they should ALWAYS be in their case.

Most retainers are lost in school lunch rooms, cafeterias, or restaurants. Do not leave your retainers out on a table, countertop, or cafeteria tray. They will likely get thrown out. Do not keep them in a tissue as crumpled tissues are easily thrown away. Do not put them in your pocket unless they are in their case. They could get crushed and crack. They could also inadvertently find their way into a washing machine with a resulting set of very clean, but unwearable, retainers.

Pets love to chew on them! Some pets (typically dogs) will even chew through the case, so put them inside a drawer or tall cabinet. Just a few seconds in a pet's mouth will destroy the retainer.

Make sure to write your name and phone number on your case.

Keep retainers away from hot water, hot car dashboards, pockets, the washing machine, and napkins. Avoid leaving them in the car on hot summer days.

### *Getting Used to Your Retainers*

Initially, you may find it difficult to speak. Practice speaking, reading, or singing out loud to get used to them faster.

When you first get your retainers, you may have extra saliva. This will return to normal within a few days.

### *Problem Solving*

Retainers are breakable, so treat them with care.

**Lost Retainer** – Please call us immediately, or your teeth will shift. Do not wait a week or two.

**Cracked Retainer** – Please call us immediately, or your teeth may shift. If the crack is far in the back, it may not need to be replaced, and this is normal. Using proper technique when inserting and removing will reduce the chance of it cracking.

Your first set of retainers have been paid for in the original treatment fee. However, there will be an additional charge to replace lost or damaged retainers (\$125 for each retainer).

### *Your Retainer Check Visits*

Please bring your retainer to each appointment. If you don't bring it there is not much we can check.

These visits are usually very quick if you are wearing your retainers as instructed.

These visits are very important as we want to make sure your teeth are not shifting. **It is your responsibility to call to schedule these appointments.** We have these appointments typically 4-6 weeks after your braces are removed, then an optional retainer check an additional 6 months later. We recommend you see us for both of these retainer checks.

If you have any questions or concerns about your retainers, or your retainers need adjusting, please call us. Do not try to adjust them yourself. If you think your teeth are shifting, call us immediately. Don't wait until it gets worse.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient Name (Print)

I have received the retainer instruction guide and it has been reviewed with me. I have read these instructions and recommendations, and understand that failure to follow these guidelines may cause my/my child's teeth to shift. If extra treatment is required to correct any shifting, or if new retainers need to be made, I understand extra fees will apply. If I do not contact the office immediately after a retainer is lost or breaks, I understand the teeth may shift.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date