

## Patient Instructions

### Retainer Care Instructions

Your retainer is custom-made to hold your teeth in their corrected positions. Consistent wear and proper care are the keys to maintaining your smile long-term. Please follow these instructions carefully.

#### Wearing Your Retainer

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- Wear your retainer exactly as instructed. Most patients begin with **full-time wear**, transitioning to nights-only once your teeth have stabilized — typically after a few months.
- Your teeth will shift if you stop wearing your retainer. Consistent wear is the only way to permanently maintain your results.
- If your retainer feels tight after not wearing it for a day or two, this is a sign your teeth have begun to shift. Wear it more consistently and call our office if it doesn't fit comfortably.
- Do not force a retainer that doesn't fit — contact our office for an evaluation.
- Always store your retainer in its case when not in your mouth. Most retainers are lost when wrapped in a napkin or left on a surface.

#### Eating & Drinking

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- Remove your retainer before eating or drinking anything other than plain water.
- Never wrap your retainer in a napkin during meals — it is easily mistaken for trash.
- Keep retainers away from pets, as they are attracted to the material and will chew them.

#### Cleaning Your Retainer

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- Rinse your retainer with **cool water** every time you remove it.
- Clean daily with a soft-bristled toothbrush and a small amount of clear, unscented soap or non-whitening toothpaste. Gently brush all surfaces.
- Soak weekly in Retainer Brite, Efferdent, or a diluted white vinegar solution (equal parts vinegar and water) for 20 minutes to remove mineral buildup and bacteria, then rinse thoroughly.
- Do not use hot water — it will warp the plastic.
- Do not boil, microwave, or place in the dishwasher.
- Do not use bleach, alcohol-based mouthwash, or abrasive cleaners.
- For Hawley retainers (with a metal wire), clean carefully around the wire with a small brush.

#### Storing Your Retainer

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- Always keep your retainer in its provided case when not wearing it.
- Store away from heat sources — car dashboards, sunny windowsills, and hot water can all distort the plastic.
- Keep out of reach of children and pets.

#### Longevity & Replacement

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- With proper care, retainers typically last 2–5 years. Signs you may need a new one include visible cracks or holes, a poor fit, significant warping, or a persistent odor that doesn't resolve with cleaning.
- Bring your retainer to every dental appointment so we can check the fit and condition.
- If your retainer is lost or damaged, contact our office as soon as possible — the longer you go without wearing it, the more your teeth may shift.

## Oral Hygiene

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- Always brush and floss your teeth before inserting your retainer.
- Bacteria from your teeth transfer directly onto the retainer, so a clean mouth means a cleaner appliance.
- Continue with regular dental cleanings every 6 months or as recommended.

### **Questions? We're Here to Help.**

Gardens Dentistry • (561) 508-6923

If your retainer is lost, damaged, or no longer fits properly, please call us as soon as possible.