



GORTON & SCHMOHL ORTHODONTICS

The Retention Phase

One of the most challenging aspects of orthodontics is to keep the teeth in place once the braces have been removed. Traditionally, retainers have been used to accomplish this, with the possibility that retainer wear could be eliminated after a couple of years when the teeth became stable.

In the early 1900's all orthodontic treatment was accomplished without removing teeth. When it was demonstrated in the mid 1900's that this non-extraction approach resulted in teeth moving later in life (relapse), the majority of orthodontic treatment involved the removal of permanent teeth, hoping to minimize this relapse tendency. Recent studies now show that significant orthodontic relapse also occurs in extraction-type cases as well. Since relapse potential seems similar with both approaches and full wide smiles are judged more aesthetically pleasing by many people, we do everything possible not to remove teeth.

The recent relapse studies show that twenty to thirty years after treatment, over half of the orthodontic patients experience significant tooth movement. The main problem is that it is not possible to predict which half will have this tooth movement. For this reason we are recommending that retainers be worn every night for at least one to two years after the braces are removed, and then to a lesser degree indefinitely (forever) while sleeping. For some this might be three to four times a week and for others it might be once per month to check to see if any tooth movement has occurred.

Your orthodontic fee includes the initial set of retainers and all follow up for at least one year. After this time patients with retainers should call us if the retainer needs adjustment. If the retainers become lost, broken, or do not fit properly, we urge you to come into the office as soon as possible. Any additional services will be subject to our current fees at the time.