

The Risks of Orthodontic Treatment

Orthodontic treatment benefits most patients with very little in a way unwanted side effects. However, there are risks to be aware of some of which are avoidable and some that are not. It is important to take note of the risks that are outlined in this leaflet. Please discuss these with the Orthodontist prior to starting the treatment.

Unavoidable risks

- * Root resorption (shortening)**
Orthodontic treatment usually leads to changes to the shape and length of the roots of the teeth. In the majority of cases the amount is small and no long-term damage ensues. However, in a minority of cases the amount can be larger. It is not always possible to predict severe shortening although there are predisposing factors in some cases. The Orthodontist will normally discuss if such factors have been identified.
- * Pain**
Teeth usually move in a response to a constant force and this leads to pain especially after a brace is fitted or adjusted. During this time, it is advisable to eat soft foods and take a painkiller. Please contact the clinic if the pain is severe and lasts for more than ten days.
- * Ulcers**
The lips or tongue can rub on the braces and become sore and ulcerated. It is advisable to place Orthodontic wax or soft sugar-free chewing gum over the part of the brace causing the problem and to see the Orthodontist if the problem persists.
- * Damage to the tooth pulp (nerve)**
Teeth may become irritated when they are moved with braces. If a tooth was previously affected by a traumatic blow this may further irritate the pulp and tissue inside the tooth canal will become damaged. The tooth colour may darken and there may be an associated abscess. It is not possible to predict this will happen however, the Orthodontist will refer you to your dentist for a root canal treatment in such a case.
- * Ankylosis**
Sometimes a tooth may not move in response to a force because it's root is fused to the bone. This is extremely rare and unpredictable.
- * Treatment duration**
On average this is between 18-24 months, but

could be longer in more complex cases. Teeth sometimes move slower in adult patients and the treatment can therefore take longer.

- * Treatment success**
Treatment is not always successful. This may be due to unfavourable growth of the jaws which cannot be predicted, or poor co-operation due to not wearing the braces as required. In such an event, it may be necessary to accept the result or consider an alternative plan. The Orthodontist will advise you accordingly.

Avoidable risks

- * Damage due to a poor hygiene and diet**
Poor oral hygiene leads to a collection of food and bacteria on the surfaces of the teeth and this is called plaque. In addition, a poor diet involving acidic, sugary and fizzy drinks and foods that are high in sugar content will help the bacteria to damage the teeth, the bone and the gums. It is important to follow the brace care instructions to avoid damage. The Orthodontist will advise you during the treatment if any signs of damage appear.
- * Damage due to failed appointment**
Your brace has to be adjusted regularly. Failure to keep appointments may lead to unnecessary damage to your teeth.
- * Relapse of the teeth**
Relapse relates to unwanted tooth movement after the braces are removed. This can occur due to unfavourable growth to the jaws or failure to wear retainers. To minimize this, retainers are provided and should be worn as instructed. Re-treatment may be required in a very small number of patients and will normally involve a fee.
- * Other risks**
The Orthodontist may inform you of other risks that specifically relate to your treatment.