

Key Messages for Orthodontic Patients.

- All NHS services have been impacted by the Covid crisis. Dentists and orthodontists have been particularly affected because infection prevention measures to keep staff and patients safe take longer. This means fewer patients are being seen in the available time.
- We know that even before the pandemic there were issues in some areas and that more services are needed to treat everyone who needs braces. This means that waiting lists can be very long - up to 5 to 6 years in some areas.
- The NHS is working to provide more orthodontic services, but this will take some time (2-3 years). The immediate priority for NHS resources is to treat life threatening illness such as cancer treatment and heart disease which have also been impacted by the pandemic.
- Dental teams are working at full capacity, and many are already working extra hours to see more patients. Providing extra services can be difficult because of the physical limits of clinical space.
- We have asked orthodontists to treat the most severe cases first. They are also prioritising those cases where delay could cause severe damage to the teeth or mouth. **As a result, this means that less severe cases may have a much longer wait.**
- Your dentist and orthodontist will check your teeth and decide how urgent or necessary your treatment is. Even urgent cases cannot be seen as quickly as they were in some cases prior to the pandemic.
- Being on a waiting list for assessment does not guarantee eligibility for NHS treatment. A nationally accepted rating system called Index of Orthodontic Treatment Need (IOTN) will be used to assess your eligibility for NHS treatment.
- Early referral will not lead to you getting treatment any quicker. Minor cosmetic treatment is not provided by the NHS.
- It is important that your mouth is clean and healthy, as orthodontic treatment can increase the risk of tooth decay and gum problems. Your dentist will advise you about good brushing and diet. Please listen to and act on their advice. **If your mouth is not healthy, orthodontic treatment will not begin or may have to be stopped.**
- We recognise, and are working to reduce, waiting times as we appreciate and understand how some children feel about the position or appearance of their teeth. Your orthodontist will be as fair as possible when dealing with their case load and take account of individual circumstances. This will include reviewing evidence from other healthcare colleagues involved in your child's care where relevant.
- **We understand the anguish the current waiting times are causing but please be patient and co-operate with your orthodontist and their team who are working in these difficult circumstances. It is never acceptable to be rude or aggressive and the NHS has a zero-tolerance policy. Dental teams have the right to refuse or stop treatment where there has been aggressive or abusive behaviour towards staff. Commissioners will be notified in these cases and will support the practice in protecting their teams. If you need to be transferred to another practice, it is likely to further delay your treatment and you are also likely to have to travel further.**

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