

# Advice for Musicians

Wind and brass players often have specific concerns before and during treatment. The information in this leaflet aims to provide practical advice on orthodontic treatment if you regularly play a musical instrument.

## **Braces and wind instruments**

Playing a wind instrument is a complex task involving the muscles of the face and lips, the tongue and the teeth. Some musicians who play a wind instrument may find that orthodontic treatment affects their ability to practice and perform.

Inexperienced musicians will probably find that wearing a brace doesn't change their performance very much, but more experienced, proficient players may notice a greater change. The good news is, that with practice and motivation, most wind instrument players can adjust to wearing braces. The information here explains what wind instrument musicians can expect whilst wearing a brace and suggests some ways of coping with problems.

## **Advice for musicians wearing removable braces**

Ask your orthodontist if you are able to take your brace out when you play your musical instrument.

Removable braces can be removed whilst playing if you do not practice for long periods every day. However, the change in the position of the teeth and their alignment may affect your performance.

Tell your orthodontist how many hours you practice each day. Leaving your brace out for long periods of time will affect the success of your treatment.

If you do have to remove your brace for a short period whilst playing an instrument, make sure you keep it in a safe place so that you don't lose or break it.

### **Advice for musicians wearing fixed braces**

Most wind instrument musicians will get used to wearing a fixed brace within a few months. The more you practice, the quicker you will adjust to your new brace.

If you play a woodwind instrument such as a clarinet or saxophone, you may adjust to your new brace very quickly.

If you play a brass instrument such as a trumpet or trombone there will be an adjustment period and you may initially have problems playing high notes, especially soon after your brace is first fitted.

If you are having a new brace fitted, try to arrange this at a time when you don't have important music exams, auditions or performances. Your music teacher should be able to advise you about important dates.

Before you start orthodontic treatment make sure your orthodontist knows that you play a wind instrument.

Your brace may rub the inside of your lips and cheeks. The orthodontist will provide you with wax, which can be used to protect your lips when you are playing.

Because the mouthpiece of a brass instrument is pressed against the lips, some players find that the inside of their lips become sore whilst practicing or performing. If this is a problem for you, ask your music teacher if your mouthpiece can be changed for a larger one to spread the load more.

You can also look at it as a way to learn how to play with better technique: plenty of air, much more breath support, more use of the corner muscles of the mouth and keeping the lips closed (or slightly rolled in) in an "Mmmm" position instead of using

mouthpiece pressure.

Wind instrument players sometimes get a dry mouth whilst practicing or performing. Consider practicing for no more than 10 to 15 minutes at a time and take regular breaks to drink plenty of water during the practice sessions or performances. Refrain from drinking fruit drinks, fizzy drinks and sugary drinks, which can all damage your teeth.

If you have teeth removed as part of your treatment, it may be a good idea to stop playing your instrument for approximately two weeks until healing has occurred. Ask your dentist for advice.

When your orthodontic treatment is finished and your brace is removed it will take a little while to get used to playing without a brace, but your new tooth positions should not affect your ability to play.

**Although having a brace will temporarily affect musical performance, the good news is that with practice and motivation, most wind instrument players can adjust to wearing braces.**