INFORMATION SHEET Patient Information **– FREQENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

What is Orthodontic Treatment?

Orthodontics is concerned with the development of the teeth and jaws, in particular the permanent teeth.

Orthodontic treatment is a way of straightening or moving teeth. It is used to improve the appearance of the teeth and the function of the jaws. This is carried out by several different types of appliance, some of which can be removed by the patient and some that are fixed to the teeth.

Orthodontic treatment seeks to improve dental health improving the appearance and function of the teeth.

What does it involve?

Before treatment can be started, a diagnosis must be made to determine what the problem is and what can be done to correct it. First, a set of records will be created; these may include plaster models of your teeth, x-rays of the teeth and jaws, photographs and a medical/dental history. With these records, your orthodontist can determine what needs to be corrected and how this should be done. Your orthodontist will discuss with you what treatment is possible.

Will I need to have teeth taken out?

In some cases, the removal of teeth is recommended. However, it is different in every case and we will not remove any teeth unless it is absolutely necessary.

How long will it take?

The length of treatment depends on the severity of the problem, your growth and level of cooperation.

Treatment times range from a few months for simple treatments to several years for comprehensive treatment. More severe problems take longer and require more cooperation. Usually the treatment times are predictable and would be discussed before start of the treatment.

The estimated time of treatment is usually very close to the actual time taken.

However, treatment may need to be extended if growth is unfavourable, or if your co-operation is poor for example if appliances are broken or lost.

The amount of time spent with the orthodontist is a very small fraction of the treatment time and most of the alignment of the teeth takes place continuously during normal activities.

What will I need to do?

Your co-operation is essential

More than any other branch of dentistry, orthodontics is a partnership between the patient (and family) and orthodontist. Orthodontic treatment frequently takes a long time – often years – and depends very much on the patient faithfully following detailed instructions. As with all health care, there is some risk associated with orthodontic treatment.

Treatment usually goes as planned, but results cannot be guaranteed. When you proceed with recommended treatment, you must be fully committed to doing your part.

Co-operation is essential and means:

• Keeping all appointments.

• Wearing all appliances, elastics, headgear and retainers as instructed.

• Avoiding foods and habits (such as nail biting/ pencil chewing) that could damage or dislodge the appliance.

• Maintaining excellent oral hygiene.

You will be given written and verbal instructions about your brace when it is fitted and we encourage you to follow these. Treatment may be discontinued if co-operation is poor and your dental health is at risk.

Will it hurt?

All appliances may feel strange to begin with and can cause discomfort. If the problem doesn't go away the orthodontist may be able to carry out adjustments to help. Teeth are usually uncomfortable immediately after adjustment but this will settle.

The mouth is very sensitive to change and the introduction of any appliance means you must expect a period of adjustment. If your teeth are painful following an adjustment, this can usually be resolved using a simple over the counter pain relief medication, for example, paracetamol.

If you have a problem during treatment, for example a breakage, the department offers telephone advice and emergency appointments are available.

What are the benefits of orthodontic treatment?

Apart from giving patients an attractive smile and thereby improving self-esteem, a good occlusion increases efficiency and function of the bite. Well aligned teeth are easier to keep clean and may help prevent decay and diseases of the gum.

Other more specific benefits are:

• Correction of the position of the front teeth may help prevent trauma to teeth and gums.

• In some patients orthodontic treatment is used to align teeth which may otherwise pose a risk to the adjacent teeth, for example buried or impacted canines.

• Orthodontic treatment may help in the replacement of missing teeth with bridges or implants.

• Orthodontics is also used to prepare patients for orthognathic surgery. This is a procedure for patients affected by facial deformity where surgery is needed to reposition the jaws.

• Patients affected by cleft lip and palate will require orthodontic treatment as part of their overall management by the cleft team.

Can orthodontic treatment damage my teeth?

Your teeth can be damaged if you do not look after them properly during treatment.

Patients need clean teeth at the start of orthodontic treatment. Regular tooth brushing has to be maintained during treatment. Poor oral hygiene may result in cavities and decalcification of the enamel i.e. permanent white or brown marks on the teeth and gum disease.

Appliances will not in themselves cause damage, but poor cleaning and too many sugary drinks and snacks can cause permanent damage. Acidic drinks such as fruit juice and fizzy drinks increase the risk of enamel damage. Brackets, wires and braces can trap food and cause more plaque to build up, therefore, the teeth and appliance need to be cleaned very thoroughly.

Shortening of the roots of the teeth sometimes occurs during treatment, the reasons for this are not always clear. However, previously traumatized teeth or teeth with an abnormal root shape are more likely to be affected. In most cases the root shortening will not cause problems.

Recession of the gums may occur during orthodontic treatment. This is rare and is more likely to occur with poor oral hygiene.

What happens once the treatment is complete?

It is impossible to predict treatment results with total accuracy when working on a living, growing person. In most cases treatment proceeds smoothly.

Once your treatment is complete we will fit you with retainers. These are appliances to hold the teeth in the new position whilst they settle in. After a time, usually a year, the retainers can be discarded. If retainers are not worn as instructed it is likely that the teeth will move.

The fact that you have completed orthodontic treatment does not ensure a lifetime of perfectly straight teeth. Some tooth movement is possible after treatment and this can also happen in people who do not undertake orthodontic treatment. Some tooth movement can occur due to growth following the completion of treatment.

Fortunately you are an individual, general statements made in this leaflet may not apply to you. We are dedicated to achieving the best possible results for you. By working together, this can be attained in a pleasant and rewarding manner.