



IN THE SPIRIT OF CHANUKAH WE PRESENT... 8 ENLIGHTENING RULES FOR RETAINER WEAR

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These nuggets of advice are based on the latest research from universally accepted literature and scientific lectures given at the past several American Association of Orthodontics international meetings.

Teeth have “memory”. No this doesn’t mean they remember when you ate that really scrumptious caramel sufganiya; rather, teeth have different types of elastic fibers, which act like a suspension in a car. This chesed from Hashem is very important as it prevents us from breaking our teeth. When teeth are moved orthodontically, these fibers are stretched and need to heal in their new position. Braces, and then retainers, help the teeth and fibers to “forget” and find peace in their new position with new fibers to cushion and hold them in place.

This article will only discuss removable retainers of which there are several designs but two main types: Metal with colors (Hawley) or clear (Essix) retainers.

Basically, every orthodontist agrees that retainers are for life. Ok... that sounds like a very long time! So now that your head is spinning like a dreidel, let me present eight guidelines that will land you a gimel and show you why retainers are a winning solution in keeping your smile healthy and beautiful.

1. FOR LIFE: This does not mean you must wear retainers the same way as when you first had your braces removed. Four months of full time wear (16-18 hours) is recommended, possibly more, depending on how complex your case. Take them out to brush and eat (depending on the retainer you have). Then, after four months, wear them every night for the first year, every other night for the second and every third night for the third year, then perhaps you’ll only wear them once a week: that’s what “for the rest of your life” means.

2. VERY IMPORTANT: If, as you decrease the frequency of wearing your retainers, they still feel the same, all is good. If, however, they feel tight, wear them full-time again until they feel as they once did. Then, once again, albeit at a faster pace, you can bring down your retainer wear to once a week.

3. NEVER GO MORE THAN A WEEK WITHOUT WEARING YOUR RETAINERS AT LEAST ONCE: Everyone goes through periods of time when their teeth are more prone to shift (pregnancy, stress, some say wisdom teeth eruption dental work etc.)

4. AFTER EATING, rinse well or brush so you don’t put your retainers on dirty teeth.

5. CLEAN YOUR RETAINERS WELL: Never boil them! Just use room temperature water, a soft tooth brush and if need be a retainer cleaner such as Retainer Brite once in a while; or just a drop of gentle dish soap (Palmolive or Fairy). **DO NOT USE TOOTH PASTE** on the clear retainers as it is too abrasive and will create small scratches that catch unwanted debris.

6. IF IT’S NOT IN YOUR FACE, IT’S IN YOUR CASE or **אם זה לא בפנים זה בפנים:** Don’t wrap it in a napkin or put it in your pocket, it will get lost or broken. If you have a dog, be extra careful not to leave them out. Dogs love to snack on retainers!

7. FOR CLEAR RETAINERS, let your orthodontist know if they don’t cover all or at least part of all your teeth for their respective arches. This could pose a problem over time for some patients. Ask if you are not sure.

8. RETAINERS ARE YOUR INSURANCE POLICY: maintaining a healthy balanced straight bite, means less time at the dentist, and according to new research a healthier body: better for your heart, lungs, digestive system, and musculo-skeletal system, as well as other benefits. Retainers are a great way to heal and stabilize your teeth, and they will tell you, depending on what you feel, if your teeth are shifting before you see it.

WHY ARE THESE POINTS SO ENLIGHTENING?

Because with ultimately very little wear you can maintain that beautiful healthy smile you finished with, when your braces first came off until 120!.

Wishing all my patients a Chanuka filled with many smiles.

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