

Aligners need  
to be worn

**22 HOURS  
PER DAY  
TO WORK**



## THINGS TO REMEMBER WITH CLEAR ALIGNERS

- Teeth only move when forces are applied consistently. For that reason, the patient **must be willing to wear the aligners 22 hours per day.**
- Since 99.9% of aligner wear takes place outside of the office, it is impossible to know for certain how compliant the patient is.
- Non-compliant patients are those not following their recommended wear schedule of 22 hours a day.
- **Non-compliance is the most common reason things go off track during treatment.**
- Non-compliance occurs for several reasons-
  - The aligners are uncomfortable, make the teeth sore
  - The aligners are embarrassing to remove/insert in public, or feel that they are talking funny
  - Lack of education about their treatment
  - People can be forgetful
  - Deliberately non-compliant



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## THE SIGNS OF NON-COMPLIANCE

- Your patient comes to their appointment not wearing their aligners. If they are not wearing them when they KNOW you are going to check them, they probably are not wearing them the rest of the time.
- Aligner is still tight after 2 weeks of wear, is it hard to insert/remove, not tracking, or has “air space” in the incisal portion of the aligner.
- A clean aligner is a neglected aligner. Aligners that have been worn will not be clean, no matter how much the patient says they clean them. There will also be wear marks on the occlusal surfaces.
- Frequently missed appointments- they may not want you to see that the aligners are not fitting from non-compliance
- Spaces that have been created from IPR have not closed
- Patients “forget” to bring their aligners to their appointments. They should have them at all times.
- If the patient says “I try to wear them” or “I wear them as much as I can” or “I forget them sometimes”- some patients get defensive when questioned about their compliance.
- If aligners fit well in the beginning and start to fit worse as treatment goes on. The patient may think that the “2 week” point is an automatic time to move to the next aligner. If they have not worn the aligners for 22 hours for each of those 14 days, they need to continue to wear the current aligner until it fits completely, is easily inserted and removed, and is tracking on attachments (if present). The next one should be tight, but should not be hard to place.
- If your patient needs to look in the mirror to insert their aligners after treatment has begun. This will become second nature if repeated. If they need help to insert or remove, they most certainly are not accustomed to wearing them.
- Understanding why the patient is non-compliant can help you both come up with workable solutions.



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## SOLUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Before treatment even starts, educate your patient on the importance of following the wear time you have prescribed. It is crucial that they understand that removable orthodontic treatment is ultimately their responsibility to ensure success. They need to know that the aligners only work when they are worn. If a patient wears them for 12 hours a day, the teeth move for half of the day, and move right back the other half, so literally no progress is being made. Trays will gradually start fitting worse as treatment goes on. Be clear of what your patient's expectations are. Are they looking for "better" or "perfect". Asking this could actually help you determine the level of compliance to expect.
- Have your patients bring all of their aligners to each visit. If the current aligner is not fitting well, try in the one before, or the one before that until you find what fits best. They will need to "backtrack" their treatment to get back on track. They will need to start at that point for 22 hours a day for 2 weeks for each stage. Let them know that by moving forward in trays before they are ready will only prolong treatment. Let them know up front that if refinement is needed due to non-compliance, they will be responsible for the additional charges.
- Show the patient their "AFTER" picture that was provided with their case. Remind them of what they wanted to achieve by starting with their treatment.
- Document every visit. This is especially important with non-compliance. Take photos if you feel treatment has gone off track. Show the patient their progress (or lack of). Explain to them that aligners do work when worn correctly. Be honest if you think non-compliance is the issue. After all, they are using up your chair time, and if they are not willing to follow the treatment, they are wasting that time. Ask them if there is anything you can do to help them succeed, while encouraging them to do so.
- You may need to adjust the treatment plan. You can tell them that they now need to wear each aligner for 3 weeks if they are not willing to wear them for 22 hours each day, which will extend the total time of treatment. Remind them that if they are willing to be more diligent with the wear time, they will get done quicker, with the result they wanted in the first place.
- Remind them that there are no refunds. Why pay all that money and not get the results they wanted?

**Communicating with your patient every step of the way is the best way to keep treatment on track.**

**Explaining the expectations up front is key.**

**Showing them their progress along the way can be a great motivator.**

**Giving them credit for treatment well done can go a long way!**



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