

Details About Your Aligner Treatment...

What Are Attachments?

Attachments are small, tooth-colored composite “bumps” that are precisely engineered to help the aligners grab the teeth and move them into the desired position. You may have attachments on your front teeth, back teeth or both, depending on what type of movements are needed. Attachments are much more aesthetic than braces, but they may be visible to others when up close. We will do our best to minimize the number of attachments placed on your teeth. Allowing us to strategically place attachments will improve the quality of your finished result and reduce your length of time in treatment.



What is IPR (Interproximal Reduction)?

The size and shape of the teeth can have as much to do with the appearance of your smile as anything that the orthodontist does with braces or aligners during treatment. Sometimes the teeth themselves must be altered slightly to give the best orthodontic result. Interproximal reduction is one procedure that your doctor might use to help give you your best result. Interproximal reduction (IPR) is a quick and easy procedure during which very precise tools to change the shape and size of your teeth, primarily on the sides where they touch each other. This is done for three reasons:

- The upper or lower sets of teeth may be naturally the wrong size and don't fit together well.
- The shape of individual teeth may not allow them to lay next to each other ideally creating “dark triangles”. This can adversely affect the appearance of a smile even though the bite may fit perfectly.
- IPR is used in cases of mild crowding so that the removal of teeth can be avoided. It also removes friction between the teeth so crowded teeth can slide past each other in the aligners and give you an ideal result.



Research supports the use of interproximal reduction by showing no increased decay on the altered surfaces, greater stability after treatment, and no increase in sensitivity when the amount of enamel removed is kept within reasonable limits.

What are Elastics?

Elastics are rubber bands that you wear with your aligners. Just like fixed appliances (aka “Braces”), aligners allow for the correction of front-to-back (AP or Anterior-Posterior) bite problems with elastics (rubber bands). The elastics hook onto little cutout slits on the aligner itself or on specialized auxiliary attachments (buttons or hooks) that are “glued” onto the teeth. These elastics can usually provide up to 2.5mm of bite-correction in adults. Children benefit from their growing lower jaw and may be able to correct even greater discrepancies (up to 5-6mm).



What is a Refinement?

Aligner patients will receive their initial set of aligners and then additional refinement aligners will be designed. Refinement aligners are “fine tuning” aligners towards the end of treatment when we are detailing your finished result. Your tooth colored attachments may be removed, added or repositioned during a refinement. If we choose to order refinement aligners, it does *not* mean that your treatment is not going well; it is just part of the process! There are many factors that can contribute to certain teeth being “stubborn”:

- Difficulty of a movement
- Collisions/friction between teeth
- Density of bone (age and/or medications can influence this)
- Previous injury or trauma to a specific tooth
- And of course, the amount of time that you are wearing your aligners

On occasion, all of the teeth in the mouth behave perfectly and no refinement aligners are needed. All patients should plan on having at least one set of “fine tuning” aligners. Refinements may contain a similar number of aligners as you received in your initial set. Despite having refinement aligners, in many cases aligner treatment is faster than traditional braces. We will do our best to keep your treatment within your original estimated treatment time.