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DISCOMFORT DURING ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

Often after the placement of a new orthodontic appliance (or braces), as well as after subsequent adjustments to that appliance, the patient may experience some tooth discomfort or pain. Since pain is subjective, and all people have a different pain tolerance, the discomfort felt may range from minor discomfort to significant pain. This range is normal.

Teeth get sore when they move. They also become somewhat mobile, and your bite will change often throughout your treatment. Occasionally, the patient will be biting only on a few teeth, or perhaps biting on tooth against metal. This condition is okay and is temporary. The tooth soreness and mobility is caused by the tooth moving through the bone, as well as the pulling of the little ligaments that hold the tooth in place. This is actually a good sign that progress is being made.

Studies have shown the most effective medications for tooth soreness are Ibuprofen (Advil) or Naprosyn (Aleve). Once you start the dosage, you should stick with the same medication and not switch back and forth during any 24-hour time period. If, however, you have better luck with other medicines, please feel free to utilize the over-the-counter analgesic of your choice. Pain killers never are prescribed for orthodontic discomfort.

If you start the analgesic before the pain starts or peaks, discomfort will not be as severe. It is a good idea to take the analgesic with the meal prior to the patient's appointment and to continue the recommended dosage routinely for a period of three to seven days, or as needed. Follow the dosage listed on your particular bottle of medication as per the patient's age or weight. You also may find it helps to switch to a softer diet for a short time.

By the seventh day (or earlier), the discomfort should be subsiding. The wires we now use have continuous action, meaning that you may have occasional bouts of tooth soreness that shifts to different teeth during the time between your appointments. This also is a good sign.

Please contact our office if the discomfort you experience is not controlled by following the above recommendations, or if the discomfort seems more severe than described above.