

PATIENT GUIDE

Aligners: the parent guide

What good wear looks like, how to help without nagging, and the rule that never bends: never let them skip ahead. · 30 Aug 2026

Every aligner moves teeth a fraction of a millimetre, and the next one is built expecting that move to be done. Wear time plus the change schedule is the whole game, which is where backup at home makes the difference. A teenager who wears their trays 22 hours a day finishes on time; one who wears them 16 hours a day does not finish.

What good wear looks like

- In 22 or more hours a day, unless your orthodontist says otherwise.
- Out only to eat, and to drink anything that is not plain water.
- Teeth brushed (or at least rinsed) before trays go back in.
- A new set weekly, best swapped at bedtime.

How to help at home

- A case in every bag; a napkin on a lunch tray is how aligners vanish.
- Keep the finished set as the backup, in its own labelled case.
- Clean trays with a soft brush and cool water, never hot.
- Write the change day on the calendar or in a shared phone note. The drift from seven days to ten is where plans slip.
- Meals at the table rather than grazing. Every snack is a cycle of out, eat, clean, in.

Completely normal

- Tight, achy trays for the first day or two of each new set.
- A slight lisp at the start; it fades with practice.
- Trays feeling loose by the end of their week.

Message us if

- A tray cracks or goes missing; they wear the previous set meanwhile.
- A new tray still will not seat fully after a few days.
- You are unsure about the change schedule.
- And please: never let them skip ahead a set.

Call us on (09)520 1880 or email hello@milkkorthodontics.co.nz.

Common questions

How do I know they are actually wearing them?

Trays worn full time feel loose by day six or seven. Trays that still feel tight at the end of the week have been out too much. Some aligner systems include a small wear indicator; ask us if yours does.

What if wear has slipped for a while?

Tell us. We can slow the schedule so each tray catches up, which costs a few weeks. Pretending it did not happen costs months.

Steady wear at home is what finishes the smile. Thanks for being on the team.