

PATIENT GUIDE

Eating and drinking with aligners

Trays out to eat, water only while they are in, and how to keep that from taking over your day. · 30 Aug 2026

Aligners come out to eat and to drink anything that is not plain water, then teeth get brushed or rinsed and the trays go back in. That is the entire rule. There is no list of forbidden foods, because nothing is in your mouth while you eat. The knack is keeping meals from stretching the two hours out into four.

2 hours out, at most

Meals, snacks and brushing all come out of the same daily allowance.

0 food with trays in

Chewing cracks trays, and food trapped under them sits against the enamel.

water the only drink with trays in

Hot drinks warp; coloured drinks stain; sugary drinks bathe the teeth.

Making it easy

Eat at meal times rather than grazing; every snack is a cycle of out, eat, clean, in. Keep a travel toothbrush and the case in the bag you carry most. If you cannot brush after a meal, rinse well with water, put the trays back in, and brush properly when you are home.

Coffee, tea and alcohol

Take the trays out for anything hot, anything coloured, and anything with sugar or alcohol in it. A black coffee or a glass of wine through a tray leaves it yellow and holds the drink against the teeth. If you drink coffee slowly across a morning, that is the habit most likely to cost you wear hours; a cup drunk in ten minutes with the trays out costs nothing.

Good to know

- Chewing gum and aligners do not mix. Gum sticks to the tray.
- Iced water is fine with trays in. Fizzy water is not sweet, but it is acidic; keep it occasional.
- On a long flight or a big night out, plan the tray break around the meal and get them back in straight after.