

PATIENT GUIDE

Elastics: how and why

Braces straighten. Elastics set your bite. Why they only work when they are in, and how to wear them. · 30 Aug 2026

The wire lines your teeth up, but it cannot control how the top and bottom teeth meet. That is the job of the small rubber bands (elastics) you hook between them, and they only move things while they are in. This is the stage of treatment that is most in your hands, and the one that most often decides how long treatment takes.

24 hours a day

Around the clock, sleep included, unless your orthodontist says otherwise. Out for meals and brushing, then straight back on.

1+ fresh pair daily

Bands go slack within hours. A stretched-out pair is basically decoration, so swap them at least once a day.

10s to hook them on

Same pattern every time; we will show you and draw it for you. Clean hands, hook on, done.

0 days off

Skip a day and your teeth drift straight back. Snapped or running low? Message us for more. Never double up unless we have told you to.

Your pattern

Each elastic runs between a hook on a top bracket and a hook on a bottom bracket. Which hooks, and on which side, is your pattern, and it is specific to your bite. We show you in the mirror at the visit where they start, and we write or draw it down so you can check. If you are ever unsure which hooks, do not guess: message us a photo and we will confirm.

Elastics come in sizes and strengths. Use only the ones we give you, and the size written on the packet. A different size does a different job.

Putting them on

1. Clean hands

Wash them. You will be reaching into your mouth many times a day.

2. Hook the top first

Stretch the band over the top hook, then pull it down to the bottom one. A plastic elastic placer, if we gave you one, makes the back hooks easier.

3. Check in the mirror

Same hooks as the drawing, both sides if your pattern is both sides.

4. Change them

At least once a day, and any time one snaps. Tie the change to something you already do, like brushing at night.

Completely normal

- Tender teeth and a tired jaw for the first two or three days. It settles.
- A slight lisp or extra saliva on day one.
- A mild ache after a pattern change. That means they are working.
- Bands snapping occasionally. Just put a new one on.

Message us if

- You are running low on bands. We will sort more.
- A hook or bracket breaks, or bands keep snapping in the same place.
- Discomfort lasts beyond a few days.
- You have lost the pattern and are not sure where they go.

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

Common questions

Can I wear them only at night?

Only if we have specifically said so. Most patterns need full-time wear; night-only wear does about a third of the work and the stage drags on.

Can I take them out for sport?

For contact sport with a mouthguard, yes; put fresh ones on straight afterwards. For everything else, leave them in.

What if I forget for a day?

Start again the moment you remember. Do not double up to catch up; a heavier force does not move teeth faster and can make them sore.

More hours in means fewer months in braces. Physics does not negotiate.