

Caring for Your Night Guard or Orthotic

It was made to fit one mouth. Looked after properly it lasts years, and most of what shortens its life is handling and heat.

Hold it from the front, never by the back ends. An appliance is a horseshoe, and squeezing or pulling on the two back ends flexes it open. Do that day after day and it distorts, loosens, or cracks. Take it in and out holding the **front**, and lift it evenly rather than levering one side off first.

Every morning

- Rinse it under cool water as soon as it comes out, before anything dries on it.
- Brush it with a soft toothbrush kept for that purpose.
Toothpaste is fine, with one caution below.
- **Avoid abrasive pastes**, particularly whitening or "extra whitening" types. They scratch the surface, and scratches hold stain and bacteria. A little hand soap or dish soap works just as well.
- **If you wear it every night, letting it air dry during the day is fine.** A wet appliance shut in a case grows things.

Heat is the enemy

- **Never hot water.** Not to clean it, not to soften it, not to sterilize it.
- No dishwasher, no boiling, no microwave.
- Never leave it in a car. A dashboard in a Las Vegas summer will warp it in an afternoon.
- Heat changes the shape permanently, and a warped appliance cannot simply be adjusted back.

Storage

- In its case, every time. Not wrapped in a napkin, which is how they end up in the trash.
- Keep the case out of direct sun.
- **When it is not in use for a stretch**, a trip or a break from wearing it, store it in water rather than bone dry. Acrylic needs moisture while it sits unused, and an appliance left dry for weeks can change shape. Nightly wear is different: drying out during the day between wears is fine.
- **Away from dogs.** This is not a joke. Dogs find them by smell and destroy them in minutes.

Call us if: it cracks or a piece breaks off · it no longer seats fully or feels tight in a new way · a tooth stays sore through the day · your bite feels different when the appliance is out and stays different · jaw pain is worse rather than better after wearing it. **Do not keep wearing an appliance that has changed how your teeth meet.** Stop and call us.

Bring it with you

- Bring it to every appointment, including cleanings. We check the fit, the wear pattern and what it is telling us about your bite.
- The wear on the appliance is information. It shows us where the force is going.

If you have an orthotic

- An orthotic is not the same as a night guard. It is repositioning your jaw, and it needs adjusting **weekly to every other week for about three months.**
- **Those adjustments are not aftercare. They are the treatment.** An orthotic that is never adjusted is not doing its job.
- Keep the appointments even when it feels fine. Feeling fine is what progress feels like.

What is normal at first

- Extra saliva for the first few nights.
- Mild tooth awareness in the morning that settles within an hour.
- Taking it out in your sleep for the first week or two. Put it back in if you wake and notice.

Questions? Call 702-734-0776

2650 Lake Sahara Dr., #160, Las Vegas, NV 89117 · Mon & Tue 7-12, 1-5 · Wed 7-12, 1-3 · Thu 7-12, 1-4

More at lasvegasdentistry.com/services/night-guards/. General information, not a substitute for an exam.