

Herbst Appliance Guidelines

The Herbst appliance is used to correct the front-to-back relationship of the upper and lower jaws. The rod and tube that we affectionately call “the shock absorber” actually connects the upper and lower jaws. This does not interfere with opening and closing your mouth or with eating. However, you might find that side-to-side movement of your jaw is somewhat restricted.

Adapting to the Herbst Appliance

- 1) At first, your mouth will feel unusually full and speaking will be awkward. If you practice reading aloud, your ordinary speech will return quickly. You may also notice more saliva than normal, but this will decrease as you become accustomed to the appliance.
- 2) The bottom screws of the appliance are likely to irritate your lip, at first. Your lip will toughen up like a callus, but it will take a few days for that to happen. You can place wax over the screws to make them smoother. On rare occasions it may be necessary for us to give you cotton rolls to place inside your cheek to keep your lip and cheek away from the screws while you are sleeping.
- 3) When the lower jaw is brought forward, the back teeth do not come together as they did prior to the placement of the appliance. However, those teeth will come together so that you can chew normally in about a week, so be patient.
- 4) Typically, patients wearing a Herbst appliance do not experience tenderness in the teeth. However, a patient may occasionally feel some tenderness that is normally short-lived. This soreness will disappear in a few days.
- 5) As with all kinds of braces, patients wearing the Herbst appliance need to be careful about what they eat. For instance, cold foods such as ice slushes, popsicles and ice will freeze the cement and loosen the brace. Sticky foods such as caramels, bubble gum and candy suckers will pull the brace away from the teeth. Hard foods like crisp vegetables and hard candies will bend and loosen the appliance. So avoid these foods during your treatment.

Some Possible Challenges with the Herbst

- 1) If you open your mouth very wide, the Herbst's rods and tubes can sometimes separate. If they do, just open wide and put the rods and tubes back together. If you cannot get them together, you can leave them apart and call for an appointment for us to put them back together again.

If the rods and tubes are not causing any pain when they are apart, you can wait until the next day or even over a weekend to have them reconnected, because your facial muscles will hold the jaw in position.

If the disconnected rods and tubes are causing you pain, call the office and we will reconnect them as soon as possible.

If you are having a problem with the rods and tubes disengaging often, please call the office and we will make them longer, so that they will not come apart as easily. We prefer not to do this unless it is necessary because we don't want your jaw to move too far or too fast; it grows better if we move it gradually.

- 2) Occasionally, a screw on the Herbst may come loose. If this happens, you will have a rod or tube dangling in your mouth. If this is causing you pain, call our office and we will replace the rod and tube. If it is not causing pain, fixing the loose screw can wait until the next day or over the weekend until Monday, the same as if the rods and tubes had disengaged.
- 3) Infrequently, the Herbst appliance can come loose or break; nothing we put in your mouth is indestructible. If you have a problem with something coming loose or breaking, please contact our office. If it is not causing you pain and you can function, you can wait until the next day or over the weekend. However, if you cannot function normally or you are experiencing pain, please contact the office and we will correct the problem as quickly as possible.

Remember, don't play with the appliance with your tongue or fingers!