



ORTHODONTICS AND WIND INSTRUMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

- Braces can be painful for wind instrumentalists, and can create embouchure problems.
- All players will have a short adjustment period.
- During the adjustment period, it is important for the teacher to keep an eye on the student, to make sure that they do not develop any bad habits.
- There are ways to decrease discomfort while playing, and teachers should educate parents and students about these resources.
- Braces are never a reason not to play an instrument.



BRASS

- Braces create more discomfort for brass players, because both the top and bottom lips are pressed directly against the braces.
- Trumpet players suffer the most, with horn players coming in second.
- According to a study, it took brass players 1-3 months to regain their previous level of playing after beginning orthodontic treatment.



WOODWIND

- Double reed players suffer the least discomfort from braces.
- Single reed players suffer discomfort mainly on their bottom lips, since the mouthpiece does not press the top lip against the braces.
- According to the same study, woodwind players typically adjust to playing with braces in less than a month



NEW PATIENTS THAT ALREADY PLAY

- New orthodontic patients that already play an instrument should inform their orthodontist before beginning treatment.
- Depending on the situation, removable braces may be a treatment option. These are good for young students that do not play for long periods of time.



NEW PLAYERS THAT ALREADY HAVE BRACES

- The orthodontist should be consulted when choosing a wind instrument. In some cases, certain instruments may aid or hinder the treatment process.
- The band teacher should also be consulted when choosing an instrument.



SOME SOLUTIONS TO PAIN AND EMBOUCHURE PROBLEMS

- Dental wax and other barriers such as “Brace Guard” can relieve some discomfort.



SOME SOLUTIONS TO PAIN AND EMBOUCHURE PROBLEMS

- For single reed players, a mouthpiece patch can relieve some pressure on the top teeth.



ADVANTAGES ON MOUTHPIECE BEAK:

- Comfort from Annoying Vibrations
- Secure Positioning of Instrument
- Facilitates Embouchure, Technique & Tonguing
- Establishes Consistently Correct Reed/Mouthpiece Intake for Beginning Students

ON LIGATURE AREA:

- Prevents Ligature Scratching & Slipping
- Improves Reed-Ligature Vibration
- Improves Tone Quality
- Increases Mouthpiece Circumference to Accommodate Oversized Ligature

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SOME SOLUTIONS TO PAIN AND EMBOUCHURE PROBLEMS

- Some experts (orthodontists) suggest a double lip embouchure for single reed players with braces. This doesn't make any sense, so just ignore them.



SOME SOLUTIONS TO PAIN AND EMBOUCHURE PROBLEMS

- Braces on the inside of the teeth may make sense at first, but actually will get in the way of the tongue.



CONCLUSION

- A student with braces can play any wind instrument that they want to. There will be an adjustment period, but in the long run it won't make a difference.
- Students with braces should take advantage of the products created for those in their situation.
- The orthodontist should always be informed if a student is taking up or already plays a wind instrument.
- If a parent is overly concerned, it may just be best to suggest that their child play percussion.



SOURCES

- Raney, N. A., (2006). The Effects of Orthodontics Appliances on Wind-Instrument Players. *Journal of Clinical Orthodontics*, Volume 40 (6), 384-387.
- Yasny, M. (1990, January 9). Will playing of instrument interfere with brace program? *The Toronto Star*, pp. F2.

