



Helping Patients Properly Connect Elastic Bands

Patients' failure to properly connect elastic bands can result in extended treatment and improper tooth movement. Despite in-office instruction, a patient often becomes confused at home and puts the elastics on the wrong teeth. This Pearl shows a two-step method for helping patients remember the proper way to connect their elastics, as demonstrated here with complicated Class II "sling" elastics.

First, we place elastic ligature ties of different colors on the teeth the elastic bands should be connected to. A Class II sling elastic runs from the lower first molar over to the upper canine bracket (A) and then backward to the lower first premolar (B) to provide both anteroposterior and vertical movement. Therefore, the upper canine bracket and the lower first molar and first premolar brackets should each have distinctive ligature colors.

Second, we take a photo of the patient's teeth with the elastic bands in place, using the patient's own phone (C). This photo can be referenced by the patient and parents at home. A short video can also be helpful for recording instructions such as hours worn, number of elastics per side, or frequency of replacement. Cheek retractors are strongly recommended for visual clarity during photography or video recording.

This Pearl has both clinical and practice-management ramifications. Consider it especially for patients who are not accompanied by parents or who are struggling to place the elastic bands properly while in the office. Following these simple steps will reduce doctor and patient frustration, shorten appointments, and prevent patient errors at home.

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