

Your Braces

Congratulations, you have made an important decision and are now wearing braces. The following information will help make your orthodontic treatment as easy as possible. Our goal is to give you the best smile and bite possible. In order to accomplish this, we will need your help!!

Oral Hygiene

It is important for you to know that the build up of plaque on the teeth or around the braces can easily cause gum disease, cavities, or permanent marks (white spots) on the fronts of your teeth. With braces, it will take you a bit longer to brush your teeth properly. Here is some good advice to make brushing easier and help you do a more thorough job.

Brushing tips:

Use a soft toothbrush. Begin by brushing the front side of your teeth. Look at each tooth as you brush it. Make small circular brushing motions. Brush along the gum line pointing the bristles at an angle into the pocket between the tooth and gum. Plaque likes to hide in this area ... beware! Brush above, below, and on the front of each bracket. Then point the bristles under the wire.

Make up your own routine so that no area is missed. For example, begin with your upper right last molar tooth. Brush it clean, and move on to the next tooth. Continue until you reach your last upper left molar tooth, and then switch to the bottom teeth. Again, start on one side and move all the way to the other side making sure to get every tooth. Now that the front sides of your teeth are clean, begin brushing the back sides of your teeth in the same order. Finally, brush the biting surface of all your teeth. You should brush your tongue and the roof of your mouth. This will help keep your breath smelling fresh.

After brushing, rinse your teeth thoroughly with water. Take a good look at your teeth and braces in the mirror. Each brace should look shiny and all the teeth should be free of plaque or food. If you see any places that were missed, quickly brush the area again with only the toothbrush and water. Toothpaste will only block your view.

Cleaning Between the Teeth:

One of the hardest areas to keep clean is between the teeth and under the wire. For this reason, we have given you a special type of brush called an Interdental toothbrush. It has a very small brush designed to reach these hard to get to areas. Use it to clean between all of your teeth. It should be used at least once each day, ideally when you brush before going to bed. If needed, use it as often as you can.

Additionally, you can purchase special floss threaders at your local drug or grocery store. These will allow you to floss between your teeth.

How Often Do I Need to Brush?

In order to make sure your teeth and gums stay health and look good when the braces are taken off, you need to brush at least (3) times each day: ideally, in the morning, afternoon (or after school) and before going to bed. You should spend at least 3 – 5 minutes each time you brush.

Consequences of Poor Brushing:

If you don't do a good job when you brush or don't brush often enough, the consequences can be terrible. When the braces are taken off, what can be left are ugly, red swollen gums and holes or permanent white spots on the fronts of the teeth. All of this can be avoided with good brushing from the start.

Clean Teeth for Appointments:

Please brush your teeth well before every appointment. It is very difficult as well as unpleasant to work on dirty teeth. We will grade your brushing at each appointment ... and we are strict. Don't be offended or discouraged if we criticize your brushing. We are only trying to make sure you will have the best smile after the braces are taken off.

Discomfort

What to Expect From the Braces:

It is expected that there will be some initial soreness after new wires are placed and/or rubber bands are started. The teeth will slowly begin to move and you will feel some pressure on them. Usually, the soreness and pressure will go away after a few days.

Helpful Hints for Soreness:

If you feel pressure or soreness after an adjustment, do not go to a completely soft diet. Try to eat normal foods which will help to make the pain go away quicker.

If needed, you can take Advil or Tylenol until the soreness decreases (1-2 days only). Please follow the instructions on the bottle for proper dosage.

Lip, Cheek, or Tongue irritation:

If one of the braces is causing irritation to your lips, cheeks, or tongue; you should take a small piece of the soft wax we gave you and place it on that brace. If this does not help and the irritation does not go away after a couple of days, please give us a call.

Eating Habits

Each brace is checked after it is put on to be certain it is firmly attached to the tooth. Biting into hard or sticky foods as well as hard objects can cause enough pressure to loosen a bracket or a band and even bend the wire. All of this can cause your teeth to move in the wrong direction.

Foods Which Are Not Allowed:

In general, you need to avoid foods and/or candies which are hard or chewy. For example, you should stay away from caramels, taffy, licorice, hard rolls, Italian bread, bagels, and hard candy. You should not bite into hard objects such as pens, pencils, eye glasses, toothbrushes, silverware, and ice cubes. We have included with your handouts a separate detailed food list. Please read it carefully and keep it available for reference.

Gum Chewing:

Yes, you are allowed to chew gum. However, it must be sugarless stick gum such as Extra, Trident, or Carefree. Do not chew large, thick pieces of gum such as Bubble Yum. This is too thick and will damage the braces. You should not chew gum at all if you have any jaw joint (TMJ) problems such as pain, noises or binding of the jaw joints. If in doubt, ask the doctor if you can have gum.

Emergency vs. Non Emergency

If a brace comes loose, please call as soon as you can during our normal office hours. We need to know so that we can make a longer appointment to fix the brace. If you come in with a loose brace without telling us, we probably will not have time to fix it and you may have wasted a trip to the office. A loose brace generally is not an emergency, but we will try to schedule an appointment as soon as possible to fix it.

If a wire has shifted, broken, or come out and is stabbing you and causing severe pain, please give us a call immediately. This is an emergency. Use the wax if it will help. If for any reason something is giving you excess pain and is not merely the initial discomfort from a new wire, please call the office immediately. We do have a 24 hour paging service if you need immediate help.

Finishing On Time

In order to finish in the amount of time we estimated at the beginning of treatment, we will need the following: good cooperation with elastics, good attendance at your appointments, minimal broken appliances, and good brushing. If you are poor in any of these areas, your treatment time can be extended several months or even years!