

# Caring for your Braces

Congratulations on your new braces! To ensure that your orthodontic treatment will be successful, you will need to increase your oral care at home. This includes following all instructions from your dental office, increasing oral hygiene, and eating a careful diet. Failure to follow these instructions may result in unsuccessful treatment, prolonged treatment, increased treatment needs and costs, and/or early termination of treatment. By caring for your braces properly, you will be one step closer to your new, beautiful smile!

## What is in your mouth?

You may have some or all the following items in your mouth. Please remember that every case is different. If you are missing something listed, its simply means that you did not need that component as part of your personalized care. If you have something not listed, you may have a more complex case. If you do not know what something is, feel free to ask us anytime!

- **Brackets** – The small metal squares on the front of your teeth.
- **Molar Bands** – The metal rings that are around your back teeth.
- **Arch Wire** – The horseshoe shaped wire that runs across all the brackets.
- **O-Rings or Ligature Ties** – The small colored ties that hold the arch wire to the brackets.
- **Elastics** – Small rubber bands that connect from a top bracket to a bottom bracket. (Instructions on how to apply will be given and vary from person to person).

## What to expect?

**Tender teeth** - In the next few hours, the tissues that surround your teeth are going to “loosen up” or soften to prepare for movement. As this happens your teeth may feel tender and sore. It is a good idea to take Advil, Motrin, or Tylenol as soon as you get your braces to avoid discomfort. This feeling may reoccur each time you come in to have your braces adjusted. Soreness is temporary and will get better over time.

**Sore tissues** - The tissues around your braces (cheeks, tongue, lips) are not used to your new appliances and may become irritated. We have provided you with wax to help with this issue. Your tissues will eventually “toughen up”, but to start, **use your wax!** Simply dry the brackets near the area causing you discomfort with a paper towel. Then, tear off a small piece of wax and mold it around the bracket with your fingers. If the wax comes out, simply place a new piece as needed. If you run out of wax, you can ask us for some at your next appointment or pick some up at your local drugstore.



## What if something breaks?

**Broken Brackets** – The glue that holds the brackets on the teeth can only be so strong. This allows us to remove the brackets safely at the end of your treatment. If you bite down too hard on something the bond will break and the brackets will come off. The glue does not ever dissolve or come off on its own. Only breaking the glue bond can remove the bracket.

## How to avoid?

### Don't

- Chew on **ice**
- Bite into **hard foods** such as raw carrots, apples, pizza, French bread crust, croutons, popcorn, corn nuts, nuts, seeds, bagels, pretzels, chips, corn on the cob, peanut brittle, meat off the bone etc.
- Bite into **hard candies** like lollipops, jolly ranchers, jaw breakers, skittles, etc.
- Chew on anything **sticky** like gum, caramel, taffy, gummy bears, fruit snacks, skittles, etc.
- Chew on **non-food items** like pens or pencils, tear labels from clothes, or rip open packages with your teeth, or bite your fingernails.
- Get **hit** in the mouth when playing baseball, basketball, soccer, football, or any other contact sport.
- **Do Not** listen to people who tell you any of the above listed habits are ok!

### Do

- Drink lots of **water** and avoid beverages high in sugar.
- **Cut food** into bite sized pieces and place them on your back teeth to chew slowly. Cook foods such as carrots to soften them.
- Eat **healthy foods** instead such as yogurt, melons, and cheese.
- **Limit sweets** as much as possible to avoid excessive plaque buildup and cavities. If you need to have something sweet stick to soft treats such as ice cream but be sure to brush well after!
- **Use scissors** to open packages.
- Wear a **mouth guard** for sports. If you do not have one, please ask us!
- **Only take advice from your dental office.** We know best when it comes to caring for the appliances that we put in your mouth.

## What if it happens?

Please remember that a broken bracket is **never** an emergency. However, it can prolong your treatment time. If something breaks, call the office to set up an appointment. We will give you instructions from there. **NEVER** try to remove a bracket or cut a wire at home.

**Let us work together to keep your braces on your teeth so we can move through treatment as fast as possible and avoid additional charges and repairs. We want your treatment to be short and fun!**

# Oral Hygiene with Braces

Step 1:



Step 2:



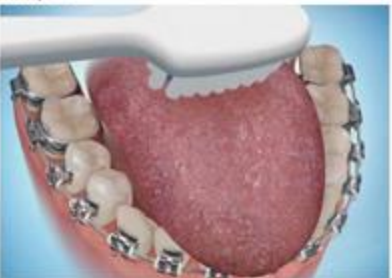
Step 3:



Step 4:



Step 5:



## Why do you need to increase brushing and flossing with braces?

Not brushing and flossing your braces properly can cause a variety of problems. Braces add to the amount of surface area in your mouth which means there is more space for tooth decaying, acid-producing bacteria and plaque to stick to. Food particles can get stuck between the wire and your teeth, so you need to make sure that your braces stay clean throughout the day. It is important to carry around a toothbrush and floss with you everywhere you go.

## What can happen if you do not brush and floss?

- **Gum Disease** - Inflamed gums are a potential complication from improper oral hygiene with braces. Due to the increased risk of bacteria build-up, your gums could become infected and inflamed. This can also cause your gums to overgrow which will require surgery called a gingivectomy to remove them.
- **Tooth Discoloration** - The longer food and bacteria stay on your teeth, the more discolored your teeth may become. This can lead to permanent staining around the brackets.
- **Bad Breath** – Because bacteria now have more places to adhere to, improper hygiene can cause bad breath.

## How do you brush with braces?

Brushing with braces takes a little bit longer and requires more patience. However, it is even more important to keep your mouth and appliances clean than before. Brush **3 times** a day for at least **2 minutes** each session.

- Rinse your toothbrush and apply toothpaste.
- Position your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the gums, and then to the tops and bottoms of your braces.
- Gently move the brush in short, circular strokes over your teeth and braces.
- Brush the fronts, backs and chewing surfaces of all your teeth.
- Brush your teeth thoroughly and methodically for at least two minutes: That's 30 seconds per “quadrant”.
- Remember to brush your tongue to remove bacteria and keep your breath fresh.

## Interdental Brushing

Once you have finished those steps it is time to use an interdental brush to brush between your arch wires and teeth. Interdental brushes are shaped like a tiny bottle brush, making it easy to get into these hard-to-reach areas. If you need an interdental brush please ask us.



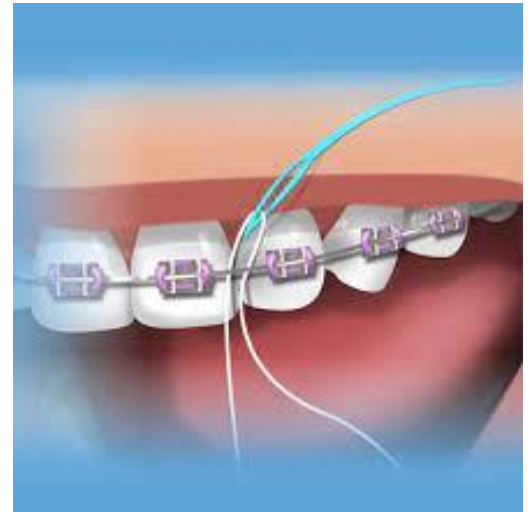
## How do you floss with braces?

Flossing with braces is just as important as brushing even though it may seem more difficult. There are several products available to make flossing with braces simple. You may choose from any of the following options. Be sure to floss **2 times** a day!

### Floss Threader –

Start with a disposable floss threader and about 18 inches of floss. Then, follow these steps

- Gently feed one end of the floss threader behind the arch wire of your braces until the loop is positioned halfway under the wire.
- Thread about 4 inches of floss through the arched half of the open loop.
- Pull the floss threader through slowly, dragging the floss with it.
- Slip the floss threader off, leaving the floss behind.
- Grip the floss between your forefingers and thumbs, creating a 3-inch taut section of floss (wrap the floss around your fingers for more control).
- Slide the floss up and down against the edges of your teeth to remove plaque.
- Pull the floss out gently, being careful not to tug on wires or brackets.
- Repeat for remaining teeth.



### Superfloss –

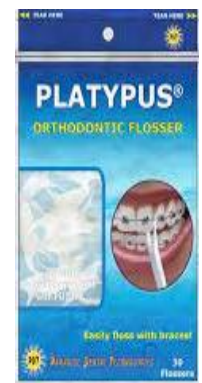
Superfloss is essentially regular floss with one stiff end. Start by taking one piece of floss. Then, follow these steps

- Gently feed one end of the Superfloss behind the arch wire of your braces until you can grab the other side.
- Grip the floss between your forefingers and thumbs, until the soft middle is between your teeth.
- Slide the floss up and down against the edges of your teeth to remove plaque.
- Pull the floss out gently, being careful not to tug on wires or brackets.
- Repeat for remaining teeth.



### Platypus Orthodontic Flossers -

Platypus orthodontic flossers are a simpler solution to flossing. They are similar to floss forks but have a thinner side that can slide under your arch wire. To use simply slide the thinner prong of the flosser under your arch wire and floss as normal. Be sure to do a C-shape on each neighboring tooth to remove all the plaque and bacteria. Repeat for remaining teeth.



### Waterpik –

A Waterpik, if used properly can be an alternative to flossing. Place the tip at a 90 Degree angle to your teeth. Pause for a few seconds between teeth before sweeping along the gumline to the next area. Having the Waterpik on high power will flush things out nicely. The Orthodontic Tip & Plaque Seeker Tip are great for cleaning right around each bracket where bacteria can hide. However, you will still need to clean in-between your teeth and gums as previously described.

**Please contact our office at anytime with questions or concerns about your braces. We look forward to working with you during your journey to a new smile!**

