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## **ORAL CARE DURING ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT**

Orthodontic treatment is an important investment for your future. Everyone helping with your orthodontic care wants you to have the best results possible. While you are wearing braces, it is essential that you take care of your teeth and gums.

More care is needed during orthodontics. If you have a look in the mirror at your new braces, the brackets and wires have many nooks and crannies that can trap food and plaque. You need to pay special attention to cleaning your teeth every day and to your diet.

Permanent damage to tooth enamel can occur if the teeth and brackets are not kept clean. Areas on the enamel surface may begin to lose minerals (the early stage of tooth decay) leaving unsightly white spots. You may also develop inflamed, bleeding gums (gingivitis).

Gingivitis and the early stages of tooth decay can be reversed by taking extra care with your cleaning and diet. If left untreated, they can lead to bigger problems that will require treatment and have life-long effects. While you are having orthodontic treatment, you need to continue to have regular check-ups with your dental professional.



## **MAINTAINING A TOOTH-FRIENDLY DIET**

Most of us are well aware that sugary foods and drinks can lead to tooth decay. Starchy foods, such as potato chips, can also stick to teeth for long periods of time and cause tooth decay. There is increasing concern about acidic foods and drinks such as vinegar salad dressings, both regular and diet coke, cordial, sports drinks, and fruit juices. This is because these foods can erode enamel from teeth when consumed frequently or when sipped over extended periods of time.

Acidity of some common foods and drinks:

<b>Acidic foods and drinks (pH&lt;4.5)</b>	<b>Low acid foods and drinks (pH&gt;4.5)</b>
Apples, apricots, cherries, oranges, peaches, pears, plums, pineapples, raspberries	Bananas, mangoes, melons, pawpaws
Tomatoes	Soups, pasta
Soft drinks (regular and diet), sports drinks, wine, fruit drinks, fruit juices	Milk, soda water, flat spring water, dairy foods
Pickled vegetables	Vegetables
Salad dressings	Meat, poultry, seafood
Lemons	Eggs, soda crackers

Saliva is your body's natural defence against tooth decay. You need to give saliva plenty of time to wash away acids that form after eating and drinking. A good rule to follow is to limit eating times to 3 meals and 2 snacks per day. You can drink plenty of water as often as you like. Be aware that bottled water may not contain fluoride. Exclusively drinking bottled water that does not contain fluoride may reduce the fluoride protection you are getting each day.

## **BRACES-FRIENDLY DIETS AND HABITS**

There are foods that can loosen, break or bend wires and bands when you are wearing braces. Avoid hard foods such as nuts and hard biscuits. Foods such as apples and carrots should be chopped into small pieces before to reduce the stress on your braces. Avoid sticky foods such as caramels, toffees, muesli or fruit bars. No chewing gum! No chewing ice!

Habits such as nail biting, unnatural tongue thrusting, pencil chewing and nervous picking at your wires can also break braces. Be aware of these and make an effort to stop them. Remember that damaged braces mean extra appointments, inconvenience and extended treatment time. If you do break your braces, be sure to make an appointment with your orthodontist immediately. Broken braces cannot correct your teeth!

## **CARE AT HOME**

When cleaning your mouth while you are wearing braces, you need to pay special attention not only to your teeth and gums, but also to the brackets and wires. The following are simple steps for keeping your teeth, gums and braces in great shape:

1. If your orthodontist has fitted you with elastics, remove them prior to brushing.
2. Using fluoride toothpaste and a small, soft toothbrush, place your brush at a 45 degree angle against the gums. Gently brush along the gumline where the gums and teeth meet, using small circular motions on each tooth.
3. Spend about 10 seconds on each tooth before moving onto the next tooth, brushing in a set pattern so that you don't miss any teeth.
4. Gently brush the braces. Press your toothbrush firmly enough so that the bristles spread into the gaps between the wire and the tooth. Brush in and around all the brackets and wires. Ensure that you brush under the wires. An electric toothbrush may be helpful.
5. Brush both the inside and the outside of your teeth using a gentle circular motion on each tooth.



Brush the outside surfaces and the inside surfaces of the lower teeth.

6. For the chewing surfaces, use a firm back and forth motion.
7. Spit out excess paste then closely inspect your teeth and braces in the mirror to check that they are clean and shiny.
8. Don't forget to replace your elastics.
9. Occasionally use plaque disclosing tablets to help you see if you are leaving plaque in any areas. Disclosing tablets can be purchased from pharmacies.
10. Use other oral care products as instructed by your orthodontist or dentist.



Brush the outside surfaces and the inside surfaces of the upper teeth.

## **FLUORIDE AND ORAL CARE PRODUCTS**

Fluoride protection against tooth decay is needed throughout life. Using fluoride toothpaste twice a day is one of the most proven ways to stay decay free. Fluoride makes teeth more resistant to the acids produced after eating or drinking and puts back minerals that are lost in the early stages of tooth decay. Studies have shown that brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste is more effective in preventing tooth decay than only brushing once a day. Brushing in the morning and before bedtime are the best times.

The risk of tooth decay may be higher while you are wearing braces. So your orthodontist may recommend other fluoride products that give you additional protection. Your orthodontist may also recommend special cleaning aids such as interdental brushes or floss threaders. If you are at all unsure of how to floss whilst wearing braces, please ask your orthodontist or dentist to show you how!

**The information presented on this leaflet is only a summary of oral health care during orthodontic treatment and should therefore be used only as a guide. It does not replace personal discussion with your dentist. Should you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact us for advice. Please call us on 9840 2963.**