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## **Orthodontic Home Care Instructions**

### **Eating with Braces**

What can you eat? Let's talk about what you shouldn't eat. For the first day or so, stick to soft foods. Avoid tough meats, hard breads, and raw vegetables. Before long, you'll be able to bite a cucumber again. But, for as long as you wear braces, you'll need to protect your braces when you eat.

### **Foods to Avoid**

- Ice (even if you're careful)
- Jolly Ranchers, snickers and other hard candies
- Gum of any kind
- Hard chips like Doritos
- Carrots, apples, pears, etc. should be cut into small pieces
- Stay away from the bottom of the popcorn bag – the hard kernels are bad news
- Meat should not be chewed off the bone – it should be cut off
- Corn of the cob should be sliced off
- Pizza crust, bagels, and French bread should be broken into bite-sized pieces
- Pens, pencils, and fingernails should not be bitten as they will damage your braces

### **General Soreness**

When you get your braces on, you may feel general soreness in your mouth and teeth may be tender to biting pressures for three to five days. Rinsing your mouth with cold water can relieve this soreness, as the wires we place are thermal activated. If the tenderness is severe, take a painkiller that you would normally take for headache or similar pain. The lips, cheeks and tongue may also become irritated for one to two weeks as they toughen and become accustomed to the surface of the braces. You can put wax on the braces to lessen this. We'll show you how!

### **Loosening of Teeth**

This is to be expected throughout treatment. Don't worry. It's normal. Teeth must loosen first so they can be moved. The teeth will again become rigidly fixed in their new, corrected positions.

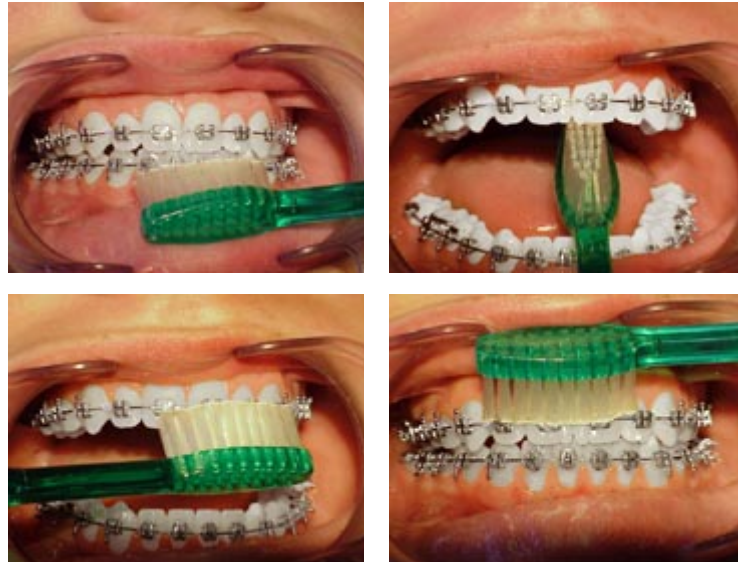
### **Athletics**

If you play sports, it's important that you consult us for special precautions. A protective mouthguard is advised for playing contact sports. In case of any accident involving the face, check your mouth and braces immediately. If teeth are loosened or your braces are damaged, phone our office immediately for an appointment. In the meantime, treat your discomfort as you would treat any general soreness.

## Brushing/Flossing

### Brushing

It's more important than ever to brush and floss regularly when you have braces, so your teeth and gums are healthy after orthodontic treatment. Patients who do not keep their teeth clean may require more frequent visits to the dentist for a professional cleaning. Adults who have a history of gum disease should stay current with their periodontal therapy during orthodontic treatment.



### Cleaning All Three Tooth Surfaces

The first thing to consider when cleaning your teeth is that there are three surfaces of each tooth that need to be brushed. When brushing the **outside surfaces** of your teeth, try to make a 45 degree angle toward the gum line between the head of your toothbrush and the tooth itself. It is especially important to make sure the area between the brace and the gum stays clean. Try to brush three teeth at a time. Make sure these teeth are completely free of food and plaque before moving to the next few. Once you're done with the outsides of the top and bottom teeth you can move to the inside.

When brushing the **inside surfaces** of your teeth, try to maintain the 45 degree angle towards the gum line as you did with the outside surfaces. Again, try to brush three teeth at a time and make sure that they are clean before moving on.

Cleaning the **chewing surfaces** of your teeth is straightforward. Remember to brush three teeth at a time prior to moving on to the next ones.

### Flossing

Flossing with braces takes a few minutes to master, but is essential while you are wearing braces. There are 2 ways to floss:

- Using a floss called Superfloss
- Using regular floss with a floss threader

The first step to flossing is getting the floss under the arch wire that connects the braces together. Once the floss is under the arch wire it can be wrapped around the tooth to one side. The floss is then pushed up toward the gum line and then pulled down toward the wire. This should be repeated four to five times to ensure all plaque is removed. Be careful not to put too much pressure on the arch wire as you pull down. Then wrap the floss around the neighboring tooth. Once both teeth are done, the floss is pulled out and the process repeated for the next two teeth.

### **What if I Have an Emergency?**

If you have an emergency, such as a broken bracket, loose or poking wire, or something else that is causing you discomfort, please call our office. We care about our patients and their comfort during treatment with us, and will try to correct any problem you might have as quickly as possible.

### **Care of Your Braces**

To successfully complete your treatment plan, you'll need to work in partnership with our office. Your teeth and jaws can only move toward their corrected positions if you consistently wear the rubber bands, headgear or other appliances as prescribed.

We look forward to working with you to complete your orthodontic treatment plan.