

Oral Hygiene Information

Patient Information

Why do I need to clean my teeth?

Good oral hygiene is important to ensure your treatment with braces runs smoothly and you do not have any problems that could potentially damage your teeth long-term.



How will a brace affect cleaning my teeth?

If you have a removable brace you can take it out to clean your teeth.

A fixed brace can easily trap food and contribute to plaque formation, which increases the risk of possible damage to your teeth and the health of the gums. It is important to spend the time brushing (5 minutes), using a good tooth brushing technique, and to clean your teeth 3 times a day after breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Take a full 5 minutes brushing your teeth and brace. Use a timer or play 1 or 2 of your favorite songs (5 mins in length) while cleaning your teeth to ensure you spend enough time on them.

What should I use to clean my teeth while I have a fixed brace?

- **Manual or electric toothbrush** - ideally soft bristle
- **Fluoride toothpaste** - most toothpaste contains fluoride
- **Fluoride mouthwash** - strengthens your teeth & prevents tooth decay
- **Tepe brushes** - for cleaning behind the wire and down the sides of the brackets

Electric toothbrushes we recommend: prices on request

- **Oral B Pro 2000 Electric Toothbrush**

3D Cleaning (pulsates, oscillates and rotates) to remove twice as much plaque as an ordinary manual toothbrush. Also has 2-minute timer.

- **Philips Sonicare Easy Clean Toothbrush**

Dynamic action effectively reaches deep between teeth and along the gum line. 2 minute Quadpacer interval timer encourages thorough brushing.

- **Philips Sonicare Diamond Clean Toothbrush**

Used by our orthodontists and many of our nurses. Exceptional clean, with 5 modes to whiten and brighten teeth, 2-minute timer, USB travel case, holds charge for 3 weeks.

Please note: You will need a shaver adaptor plug



Recommended tooth brushing technique



1. Front surface of your teeth, brace & gums

Starting at your last tooth, work your way from one side of your mouth to the other, cleaning the top part of the brace. Direct your brush at an angle (45°). Brush in a small circular motion, and move all the way across to the last tooth on the other side. Ensure you are cleaning the tooth surface



After cleaning above the top of the brackets, next clean underneath the brackets using the same technique.

If you started with your top teeth now clean the lower teeth in the same way. Brush your gums after cleaning your teeth



2. Biting surface of your teeth

Clean the biting surface of your teeth in small, circular motions



3. Back surface of your teeth

Clean the back surface of your teeth in small, circular motions

Please clean your teeth 3 times a day for 5 minutes after breakfast, lunch and dinner and after eating.

Take your time: There is no quick way of effectively cleaning around your fixed brace.

Tapes: After tooth brushing, before bed, use the tepe brush behind the wire, gently cleaning each side of the bracket.

Electric toothbrush: Use exactly the same technique, but rather than moving the brush in small circles hold the brush still in position for a few seconds before moving onto the next tooth. The oscillating head of the electric toothbrush will do the work for you.

Fluoride mouthwash: Use after cleaning your teeth and before going to bed. Follow instructions for use, and DO NOT rinse after. Mouthwash is not a substitute for cleaning teeth!

What damage will plaque cause?



Decalcification

This is a white area on a tooth where the enamel has been scarred. Patients most often see decalcification after fixed braces come off, in areas around where the brackets were and along the gum line.

Some people think that braces cause decalcification scars, this is NOT the case. Decalcification occurs due to poor cleaning, allowing the acid in the plaque to sit on the enamel long enough that it starts leeching out calcium from the enamel - that is why it is called 'decalcification'. The calcium is what makes the enamel strong, and without it, the enamel becomes soft.

Decalcification is the first stage of a cavity, when the acid has not yet reached the inner layers of the tooth, but has weakened the outer layer.



Cavities

Plaque bacteria turn sugar in the food we eat into acid. Poor tooth brushing and/or excessive and frequent intake of sugar will cause decay (cavities). These cavities, if left untreated, can become very painful and leave holes in the teeth. The decayed area of the tooth will generally require to be removed and filled by the dentist.



Gingivitis

Plaque bacteria can cause gingivitis, where the gums become red, inflamed and may bleed. This happens because the acid produced by the plaque irritates the gums causing an inflammatory response. Gums will return to normal with good tooth brushing, ensuring the gums are also brushed as well as the teeth.

All of the above problems are completely avoidable and caused by poor oral hygiene. Good toothbrushing and following our advice on keeping your teeth and braces clean will prevent these issues entirely.

How will I know if I am cleaning my teeth well enough?

- At each orthodontic appointment we will assess your oral hygiene. If it is poor we will inform you of this and show you the problem in the mirror. We will go through good tooth brushing techniques with you to help you with this matter.
- If tooth brushing is very poor, we may get you to clean your teeth whilst in the dental chair and will inform your dentist that you are struggling with brushing your teeth and we have advised you on good tooth brushing.
- If oral hygiene is persistently poor and your teeth are at risk of damage we will stop treatment and remove your brace even if treatment is not complete. Dental health is very important to us and we hope it is to you too.

With good oral hygiene, we can work together to achieve a healthy, perfect smile.

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