

Caring for Your Braces

Properly taking care of your teeth and braces will ensure you have beautiful results at the end of your treatment.

You have been given a bag full of things to help you achieve these results. All of the items you have been given can be purchased at the store with the exception of fluoride. The fluoride is a prescription medication which can be purchased at our office.

Listed below are some instructions that will help you during your time in braces. If you have any questions, please call the office.

- **Brush** your teeth and braces according to the chart given to you. Pay close attention to your gum line and the area underneath your wire! **If plaque sits at your gum line, your gums will get very red and swollen which makes it difficult for your teeth to move.** Your gums will also hurt and bleed which makes brushing more difficult and your appointments will be uncomfortable.


Plaque sitting on your tooth enamel could also result in decalcification (white spots) and decay.

- Don't forget to brush your tongue to help eliminate bad breath!
- **Floss, floss, floss!** Flossing is more difficult with braces, but not impossible. Please floss as much as possible during the week just as the assistant demonstrated during your first appointment. We will allow you the opportunity to brush and floss without your wires in whenever possible; however, this alone is not often enough to ensure healthy gums and teeth.
- The small tree shaped brush is called a proxy brush. This is a good item to keep with you at school. After eating lunch, you will have food left hanging on to your braces. Nobody wants to see this!! You can use your proxy brush to poke the food out from underneath your wires. Always aim away from your gums so you don't poke yourself.
- Your **fluoride** should be used every night before bed. This extra fluoride will strengthen your enamel, helping to prevent the white decalcification spots and decay. Only a pea size amount is needed. **After brushing with the fluoride, don't rinse or drink for at least 30 minutes.**
- **Wax** is one of those things you may never need, but you should always have some available. Wax can be used to alleviate discomfort from a bracket rubbing an ulcer or a wire poking your cheek. Pinch off a small piece of the wax and place it directly on the bracket or wire. If a wire is poking your cheek, please call the office and we will take care of the problem. If you are not available to come in, we can give you instructions over the phone to help alleviate the discomfort until you are able to be seen.

- **Please use some common sense with your choice of foods.** You need to avoid anything sticky, hard or chewy like:
 - caramel
 - gum
 - Starbursts
 - Jolly Ranchers
 - Skittles
 - gummy bears
 - apples
 - carrots
 - corn-on-the-cob
 - nuts
 - popcorn
- These foods can cause brackets to break (come loose) or wires to be bent. If this happens often, your time in braces could be extended. Please call the office as soon as possible if something is broken. We need to repair anything that is broken before your teeth start shifting.

Even if your next appointment is only a day away, please call so we can adjust our schedule if necessary to ensure you are seen in an appropriate amount of time.

We understand that everyone has a busy schedule and our office strives to give each person the best quality of care while working efficiently and in turn, helping you stay on your schedule!

 You will be seen about every 6-8 weeks depending on what needs to be done at the next appointment. **We do try to accommodate you with after school appointments, but this may not always be possible.** We will provide you with a school excuse after each appointment.

If you have an emergency during a time when the office is closed, there is an emergency number given on the voicemail message.

An emergency would be if something was poking or hurting and you are not able to alleviate pain with wax. Also, if you get hit in the mouth with a ball, elbow, etc. please call so Dr. Williams can make sure there isn't any damage to your teeth.

Our website, www.drwilliamsorthodontics.com, includes brushing and flossing instructions. You will also find first aid instructions under the "Patient Info" tab.

A terrific website is www.bracesquestions.com. The "Emergencies" and "Videos" tabs will be especially helpful.

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During the course of treatment, you will probably hear many orthodontic terms used by the orthodontist and staff. It is helpful to know what common parts of your braces are called so that you can tell your orthodontist if something is bothering you or if you have questions about your treatment. Here's a diagram to help you understand your braces better.

BRACES: A PARTS LIST

Archwires are thin wires. They guide the movement of teeth.

Headgear tubes allow headgear to be put on and taken off. The metal part of the headgear (**facebow**) slides in and out of the headgear tube.

Ties are rubber rings or fine wires. They come in many colors. Ties fasten archwires to brackets.

Brackets are cemented to the teeth. They have grooves that hold the archwires.

Buccal tubes hold the ends of archwires in place.

Bands are metal rings that wrap around the back teeth. They anchor the wires that move the teeth.

Elastics are rubber bands. They hook on braces to move teeth toward each other. Elastics come in many colors.

Springs or coils push or pull on brackets to change the space between teeth.

