

Welcome to your new Smile Journey!

There are a few things you should know. Dental braces can trap a lot of food against the teeth and gums. That's why it's vital for you to follow the braces care instructions. We want to make sure you have all the information you need to maintain a healthy smile during treatment.

Brush Your Teeth After Every Meal

Remember to always brush your teeth at least twice a day. If possible, we recommend also brushing your teeth 30 minutes after every meal. It's important to wait 30 minutes so your saliva has enough time to wash away the acids from your food. Please avoid using advanced or extreme whitening toothpaste.

Brush your teeth like this:

1. Brush for 4 minutes: 2 top and 2 bottom
2. Brush the outside of each tooth.
3. Brush where your gums and teeth meet using a circular motion.
4. Brush the inside surface of each tooth.
5. Brush the chewing surfaces of your teeth.

Floss Once a Day

Plaque loves to hide between teeth where your toothbrush bristles can't reach. That's why it's important to floss once a day. An orthodontic floss threader helps you floss with braces.

Floss your teeth like this:

1. Thread floss through the threader and slip it up behind your archwire.
2. Pull the floss between two teeth and up under your gum margins.
3. Rinse with clean water.



Strengthen Enamel with Fluoride

Use fluoridated toothpaste as well as a fluoride mouth rinse. Fluoride will help strengthen your tooth enamel, decreasing your risk of cavities.

Avoid Sticky, Hard-to-Chew Foods

While you're wearing metal braces, you can eat almost all your favorite foods. To learn more, check out our blog post on what foods you can eat with braces.

Please stay away from these troublemakers:

- Sticky chewy foods like taffy, caramels, and jerky
- Hard foods like raw carrots and apples, unless cut into bite-size pieces
- Crunchy foods like corn chips, popcorn, almonds, and corn nuts
- Candy and other sweets, unless in moderation
- Sugary beverages like fruit juice, sports drinks, and pop

Take Care of Poking Wires or Brackets

From time to time, we may need to fix poking wires or loose brackets in our office. But there are many things you can do at home to take care of small issues.

- If your wires start poking, trim the wire with clean nail clippers.
- If a bracket is irritating your cheeks, place a small piece of braces wax on the offending bracket.
- If a bracket comes loose, we will most likely replace it at your next visit.

Think You Have an Emergency? **5 Issues You Can Fix at Home**

1.) Tooth Pain after Adjustments

During the course of your orthodontic treatment, we'll make slight adjustments to your braces to ensure your teeth and jaws move into optimal alignment. Since dental braces exert pressure on your teeth, you will feel slight pain or discomfort several hours after your appointment with us.

We recommend taking over-the-counter pain relievers (like ibuprofen) right before your appointment. That way, the pain reliever has a chance to work before we tighten your braces. It may also be a good idea to eat soft foods after your appointment, such as mashed potatoes or pasta. You can also use the bite wafer supplied in your welcome kit.



2.) Irritated Lips and Cheeks

After getting braces for the first time, we'll give you some wax in case the brackets irritate your lips and cheeks. Simply pinch off a pea-sized glob of wax before squishing it between your fingers. Next, gently push the wax on top of the offending bracket. Many of our patients use the wax before meals to avoid irritating the soft tissue in their mouths. Since the wax isn't medicated, it's harmless if accidentally swallowed.

3.) Loose or Missing Elastic Ties

During orthodontic treatment, you'll need to avoid sticky foods like caramel. Otherwise, the small elastic ties that hold the arch wire in place can come loose or fall completely off their brackets. Our orthodontists recommend using tweezers to put elastic ties back.

4.) Loose Brackets

If you play contact sports, let your dentist know so they can create a protective mouth guard. A mouth guard for braces forms a protective layer around your teeth so you won't need emergency dental care the next time you're tackled on the football field. A bracket can also come loose after biting into hard foods, like whole apples and carrots.

Most patients don't realize that a bracket is loose until they go to brush their teeth and notice that the bracket is off-center on the tooth. A loose bracket may also not be noticeable right away if you have ceramic braces, which are tooth-colored. If a bracket comes loose between appointments, you'll need to schedule an appointment. In the meantime, use tweezers to slide the bracket into its proper place. Next, you'll need to gently push the bracket back against the tooth.

5.) Protruding Wires

If you have a wire protruding off the end of your last bracket, use a small keychain nail clipper to trim the excess. We recommend using a folded tissue to isolate the piece of wire from your gums before trimming. If the excess wire isn't long enough to trim, place a pea-sized glob of wax between the wire and your cheek.