



YOUR BRACES

An Introduction

1. PARTS OF THE APPLIANCE:

- A. **Bands** are the thin metal rings fitted around the back teeth that serve as an attachment for wires or other appliances.
- B. **Brackets** are small metal attachments cemented directly to the teeth. They have a slot into which the archwire fits.
- C. **Archwires** are the main wires that run from one side of the mouth to the other.
- D. **Elastic Ties** are tiny "O"-shaped rings used to hold the wires into the bracket slots.
- E. **Elastic Chains** are "O"-shaped rings connected to form stretch-chains used to move the teeth together.
- F. **Hooks** may be attached to brackets or archwires for attachment of rubber bands.



2. DISCOMFORT: Some discomfort is to be expected for a few days following the placement or adjustment of appliances. Tylenol or Ibuprophen may be taken if needed. Sometimes the cheek, lips, or tongue may become irritated by the appliance. This is especially common when appliances are first placed in the mouth. A small amount of wax may be applied directly to the metal part to relieve the irritation until the tissue adapts. If you need more wax, please call our office or ask us for it at your next appointment. If canker sores develop, rinse with a teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water four times a day for two days.

Occasionally, chewing forces may bend a wire loop or small tie-wire into the cheek or gums. A spoon handle, pencil eraser, fingernail, Q-tip or blunt object may be used to either bend down a wire irritating the cheek, or to slightly pull one out away from the gum. Please call the orthodontist if you need help.

After the appliances are inserted, and after each adjustment, your teeth may be sensitive for a few days, and a diet of soft food may be advised.

3. BROKEN APPLIANCES: Orthodontic appliances are delicate and subject to breakage. If part of the appliance is broken or loosened, but is not causing discomfort, please call our office so we can determine if it is necessary to see you earlier than your regularly scheduled appointment. An office visit for repairs may be necessary to maintain the progress of treatment or to prevent unfavorable movement of teeth. Also, notification of broken appliances in advance may allow us to allot the extra time in our schedule required for the repairs and to prevent an additional appointment.

4. DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- A. **Appliance Damage:** Your braces can be damaged by certain foods. Hard, sticky, or chewy foods can bend wires, pull bands loose, and break off brackets. If you damage your appliances, treatment will be delayed and the time in braces will be longer. If appliance damage is excessive, an additional charge may be made.
- B. **Forbidden Foods:** All types of gum; any kind of candy that is hard, sticky or chewy, (such as caramels, taffy, and jawbreakers); peanut brittle; nuts; popcorn; corn chips; hard rolls; or meat on bones.

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C. Never Bite Into: Apples, pears, or other hard fruits, carrots, corn-on-the-cob, hard rolls, or tough meat. These foods may be eaten with care if cut into thin slices or small pieces.

D. Avoid as Much as Possible: Candy, cakes, pies, cookies, jellies, and other foods high in sugar content. Because sugar rapidly forms damaging deposits on the teeth, these foods should be avoided when it is not possible to brush immediately after eating.

5. TOOTHBRUSHING INSTRUCTIONS:

A. Importance of Brushing:

The orthodontic appliance causes a great increase in the accumulation of food and bacterial plaque on the teeth. If plaque is not removed by frequent and thorough brushing, it can cause permanent discoloration and decay of teeth, swollen and bleeding gums, mouth odor, and unsightly appearance.

B. When to Brush: It is important to brush immediately following each meal or snack, particularly if foods high in sugar content have been eaten. Most of the damage to teeth occurs within the first half hour after eating. You should spend 3-4 minutes to thoroughly clean your teeth. Brush at least 3 times per day.

C. Can't Brush? If it is not possible to brush, rinse vigorously with water to remove at least some of the food particles trapped by the appliance.

D. How to Brush:

1. First, scrub the teeth and braces to loosen the larger trapped food particles.
2. Next, direct the bristles underneath the wire from both above and below. Then angle the brush toward the gum and brush along the gumline. It is especially important to thoroughly brush the portion of the tooth between the bracket or band and the gum line.

3. Use a scrubbing motion to clean the remaining surfaces of the teeth.

4. After brushing, rinse and look in the mirror to check that your teeth look clean and your braces shiny.

E. What Type of Brush? A soft brush is recommended.

F. Waterpik? This device is helpful in removing food particles from areas the toothbrush cannot reach and should be used after brushing. It is not a substitute for brushing or flossing.

6. MOUTH INJURIES: If an accident occurs in which there is a blow to the teeth or mouth, check for loose appliances, and immediately call for an appointment.

7. PROTECT YOUR TEETH: If you play hockey, football, soccer, or other contact sports, a mouth guard is recommended to help prevent tooth loss or injury.

8. IMPORTANT: All patients are reminded to have regular checkups with their family dentist throughout orthodontic treatment or guidance. Your teeth can be cleaned, given fluoride treatments, checked for cavities, and usually filled with appliances in place. This is important for all patients, but especially for those with diet and brushing problems.

