



## **Life with braces**

Remember that cooperation is very important in getting excellent and timely results. Your braces are carefully made for your mouth, and only yours, and are composed of wires, bands, and/or brackets. Great care is used to place them in your mouth so that you will be as comfortable as possible.

### **Discomfort**

It's normal to have discomfort for three to five days after braces or retainers are adjusted. Although temporary, it can make eating uncomfortable. Soft foods are encouraged. Rinse the mouth with warm salt water. Over-the-counter pain relievers, acetaminophen or ibuprofen, are effective. Some patients are more sensitive than others. Long experience has taught us that as soon as this period is over you will forget that the braces are in your mouth.

### **Care and Hygiene**

With good hygiene, teeth do not decay any more under braces than they do when the teeth are not being moved. It is necessary, however, to keep your teeth well brushed, especially after eating and most of all before you go to bed. Food allowed to remain on teeth while you sleep will cause a weakening of the enamel of the tooth and may lead to decay.

Brush every tooth and arch separately and slowly to be sure you do a thorough job. More time is necessary to keep the teeth and braces shining. It is also very important that each time you brush you time yourself with a watch, clock, or mechanical or electronic timer to insure that you brush for a full two minutes each time. After brushing, rinse thoroughly with a fluoride mouthwash such as ACT.

Floss each night after your last brushing of the day. Use a floss threader to get the floss between the arch wires and the teeth.

### **Loose Brackets, Wires, or Bands**

If the braces have come loose in any way, call the office to determine the appropriate steps. Save any pieces of your braces that break off and bring them with you to your repair appointment. You may wish to put orthodontic wax around the area to minimize the movement of the loose brace. If you are not in pain, this is not a true emergency.

Please call the office at your earliest convenience to schedule an appointment to repair the braces. Be sure to tell the receptionist at the time of your call if you have a loose, broken, or missing bracket.

Eating the types of foods listed below is likely to loosen brackets, bend wires, or even damage teeth. Every loose bracket or band can add a month onto total treatment time in braces.

### **Foods to avoid**

Hard foods like pretzels, bagels, popcorn, hard crusted bread, ice, hard chips, taco shells, etc. They break brackets off and damage the arch wires. Hard candies such as carmel candies, jaw breakers (duh?), Now-or-laters, Skittles, etc., can do likewise. Some examples of foods with sugar which you should try to avoid are soft candies, cakes, and desserts. If you eat any of these, you must brush your teeth immediately to avoid the creation of white spots on your teeth caused by demineralization.

### **Poking Archwire**

If the end of a wire is poking in the back of the mouth, put wax over the area to protect the cheek. Call the office to schedule an appointment and have it clipped. If you are uncomfortable, make sure you inform Dr. Noyce.

In a situation where the wire is extremely bothersome and the patient will not be able to see the orthodontist immediately, as a last resort, the wire may be clipped with an instrument such as fingernail clippers. Reduce the possibility of swallowing the snipped piece of wire by using folded tissue or gauze around the area to catch the piece you will remove.

### **Irritation of Lips or Cheeks**

Sometimes new braces can be irritating to the mouth. A small amount of orthodontic wax makes an excellent buffer between the braces and lips, cheek, or tongue. Simply pinch off a small piece and roll it into a ball the size of a small pea. Flatten the ball and place it completely over the area of the braces causing irritation. If possible, dry off the area first as the wax will stick better. You may then eat more comfortably. If the wax is accidentally swallowed it's not a problem. The wax is harmless.

### **Compliance**

If you are asked to wear rubber bands or another auxiliary appliance, you must cooperate in order to shorten the time that braces will be on your teeth. If you do not wear the rubber bands as instructed, it is possible that your case will never be finished or will take much longer than anticipated.

Be sure to keep your appointments regularly. Please be on time. We respect the time of our patients and their parents and make every effort to keep our schedule on time. If you are aware of an unusual problem, it would help us to plan ahead if you would call and advise our office.

## **Poor Hygiene**

Poor Hygiene will result in the following treatment complications:

- Demineralization; food and plaque that is not removed from the teeth by brushing and flossing will cause permanent (irreversible) scarring, or white stains on the teeth.
- Cavities; food and plaque that is not removed by brushing and flossing will progress from demineralized lesions to cavities that will require dental restorations.
- Gingivitis; food and plaque not removed by brushing will cause inflammation and growth of the gums, this can lead to increased plaque retention, demineralization, cavity formations, and prolonged gingivitis can progress to periodontal disease (destruction of the areas surrounding the teeth), and ultimately tooth loss.
- Poor treatment results; the overall quality of treatment will be compromised if oral hygiene is poor.
- Extended treatment time; poor oral hygiene can lengthen the time in braces because braces cannot be placed or repositioned in the proper positions due to the excessive swelling and growth of the gingiva (gums), thus complicating treatment and lengthening the time in braces.