

How to keep your teeth and gums healthy whilst wearing braces

Keeping your mouth healthy is very important. When you have braces on it can be more difficult to clean your teeth. You also need to avoid certain foods and drinks, as your braces are fragile. If you look after your teeth and gums, you can avoid tooth decay and gum disease.

What is tooth decay?

- When you eat or drink something sugary and don't brush your teeth properly, bacteria in your mouth produce acid. The acid makes holes (decay) in your teeth.

What is gum disease?

- If you do not clean your teeth properly, bacteria make a layer on the teeth called 'plaque'.
- Plaque can cause your gums to become red, puffy and sore. They may also bleed when you brush your teeth and you may have bad breath.
- If gum disease is not treated, teeth can become loose and fall out.

How can I keep my mouth healthy?

- Keep your teeth and gums clean. Good brushing is very important.
- Avoid sugary foods and drinks, especially between meals.
- Cut down on fizzy and acidic drinks.

What happens if I don't clean my teeth properly wearing braces?

- If you don't clean your teeth properly you can get permanent damage, such as white or brown marks on the teeth which cannot be removed.
- You can also get gum disease if you don't clean your gums properly, when you have braces.

Make sure this doesn't happen to you!



How should I brush my teeth and gums with Fixed 'Train-Track' braces on?

- You should **brush your teeth** and braces **after each meal** and in the **morning** and **evening**, for at least **2 minutes** each time.
- Use a **toothpaste containing fluoride**.
- Use a small-headed toothbrush (manual/electric).
- Make sure you brush every surface of the tooth and brace, including where the tooth joins the gums.
- Move the toothbrush in small gentle circular movements.
- Use a **mouthwash**, as advised by your orthodontist.

- You must also use **an inter-dental brush or a specific orthodontic brush** to clean in between the squares of the brace. Your orthodontist or dentist can show you how to do this properly.



Interdental brushes

- You can use a disclosing tablet to highlight areas of brushing you have missed. The tablet contains a harmless dye which stains plaque (remnants of food and bacteria) on the teeth.



Plaque-disclosing solution

How do I clean my Removable Brace or Retainer?

- Clean the brace twice a day, when you brush your teeth.
- Use a soft toothbrush and soap to clean the retainer and rinse it after cleaning.
- Remember to brush all surfaces of the retainer including the plastic and any metal clasps using a scrubbing motion.
- Avoid using toothpaste to clean the retainer as the small particles can damage the brace.

Consider a special retainer cleaner like Retainer Brite®, Freshguard® or Steradent®.

Eating and Drinking

- Sugary foods and drinks are harmful to the teeth and cause decay.
- Acidic foods and drinks and fizzy drinks can dissolve the teeth making them thinner and more sensitive. This is called erosion.
- The more often you eat these things, the more decay you are likely to get.
- You should limit how much and how often you have sugary and acidic foods and drinks.
- Foods to avoid include sweets, cakes, biscuits, fruit juices, fizzy drinks and milkshakes.
- As your brace is fragile, it is important to look after it and avoid hard, sticky and chewy things to prevent breakages to the brace.
- In between meals you should drink plain water and eating sugar free foods such as bread, cheese and vegetables are recommended.

Smoking and Alcohol

- As well as mouth cancer, smoking can cause staining, bad breath, gum disease and this can be accelerated during brace treatment.

- Alcoholic drinks can be high in sugar and some mixer drinks can be acidic. These drinks can cause tooth decay and erosion.

Please note:

- **If you fail to keep your teeth and gums clean and look after your brace, we may stop treatment.**
- **You must still see your dentist for your regular check-ups.**