

# Orthodontic Oral Hygiene Instructions

Maintaining proper oral hygiene is a very important part of your orthodontic treatment. You will notice that it is much harder to keep your teeth clean with braces and other orthodontic appliances. Food compacts onto the brackets and between and around your teeth. These food deposits can only be removed by daily, proper and thorough brushing and flossing. Thorough brushing and flossing after each meal should become part of your daily routine throughout your orthodontic treatment. If brushing is not an option for some reason, follow these steps until you can brush:

1. Take a mouthful of water and swish vigorously for 15-20 seconds to help dislodge food particles trapped in your braces.
2. Use an interproximal brush to loosen any food that may be stuck under the wires.
3. Swish with water again for another 15-20 seconds.

Failure to brush and floss as directed can lead to tooth decay, gingivitis, periodontal disease and permanent white “scars” on the teeth, called decalcifications. Although these problems can occur without orthodontic treatment, the risk is greater to individuals wearing braces and especially in patients with poor oral hygiene.

Gingivitis, which is inflammation of the gums, can usually be prevented by proper and regular brushing and flossing. If gingivitis is left untreated it can lead to periodontal disease, which may result in the loss of supporting bone and/or teeth. Should this condition occur and become uncontrollable, orthodontic treatment may have to be discontinued short of completion.

Decalcifications are the white, soft enamel areas that can become decay and result in permanent tooth damage requiring extensive dental treatments. These can be minimized by maintain good oral hygiene, regular dental cleanings and exams, the use of a fluoride rinse as recommended by your dentist and following a proper diet.

Example of excellent oral hygiene with braces:

- No visible plaque
- No visible food
- No swollen gums
- No bleeding gums
- Shiny braces