West Cobb
ORTHODONTICS

Congrats! You've got braces, now what?

You just got braces, but your first question probably is when will you get them off!
If you follow these rules, I promise you will get them off faster than if you don't.
So, here are a few guidelines to help you keep your teeth and braces in good shape.

1. Keep your teeth &braces clean

Did you know your mouth is home to BILLIONS of bacteria? They live on your teeth, tongue, and gums in the form of plaque (yeah that's right, the white stuff on your teeth is bacteria with little bits of leftover food). These bacteria eat what you eat , and they LOVE sugar! They get rid of their waste in the form of acid, which is very abrasive to your teeth, and this acid is what causes cavities! Gross right.... So what can you do to stop the bacteria from getting acid all over your teeth and causing cavities? BRUSH & FLOSS YOUR TEETH REGULARLY! This is really the only thing that will stop it.

- You should Brush your teeth after every meal, at least **three times** per day: morning, noon, and night.
- Brush for **2 minutes** every time. You should **not** rinse your mouth with water after brushing.
- When you are brushing, make sure to brush above and below your braces. Spend extra time brushing your along your **gums**, because this is where the plaque is!
- We recommend an **electric toothbrush** that has a built in timer.
- Make sure any toothbrush you use has **soft bristles** that won't hurt your gums.
- Floss **once** a day. There is a special technique that you need to use for braces that uses floss threaders. I recommend **platypus flossers** because they are specifically made for flossing with braces and make it much easier!
- **Waterpiks** are great for cleaning your braces, and we definitely recommend getting one if you can.
- Mouthwash is a great addition to brushing and flossing but it can NOT replace it. You still have to brush and floss.
- Did you know? The most common complaint people have when they get their braces off are the white spots on their teeth around where the bracket used to be. This is a small cavity that forms when you don't keep your teeth clean. Unfortunately, this is a permanent tooth scar, and usually does not go away.

2. Avoid certain foods

The brackets (or braces) that we placed are very delicate, and can be broken easily (how do you think they come off so easy when you're finished with treatment?) When you break a bracket, that means that it's no longer attached to the tooth, and therefore the tooth is no longer moving. If you are constantly breaking brackets that means your teeth aren't actually moving, and we will be unable to make progress with treatment. So what can you do to make sure you don't break brackets? Avoid foods that are particularly bad for your braces- mostly anything sticky, chewy, crunchy, or hard. Here is a list!

- **STICKY:** caramels, taffy, dried fruit (raisins), bubble gum, starburst, tootsie rolls, fruit roll ups, large gummies, rice krispy treats, snickers, milky way, twix, baby ruth, butterfingers, now and laters, air heads, candy canes suckers, jolly ranchers, sweet tarts, life savers, jawbreakers, smarties, whoppers, gobstoppers, M&M's, skittles, licorice. When in doubt- avoid candy altogether, the sugar alone can cause cavities.
- **CRUNCHY:** chips, nachos, hard taco shells, nuts, crunchy peanut butter, popcorn, pretzels,
- **HARD**: apples, pears, carrots, celery, bagels, hard bread, pizza crust, croutons, granola bars, protein bars, beef jerky, wings, ribs, hard cookies, ice, corn on the cob ****any of these hard foods can usually be cut into bite sized pieces, taken off the bone or the cob, or cooked to make them softer so you can eat them.
- REMEMBER: Do not chew on pens or pencils or bite your fingernails

3. Keep your appointments

- We will see you for adjustment visits every **4-8 weeks**. It depends on what stage of treatment we are in as to the interval between each appointment. Make sure to pay attention to when we want you back, because it may be sooner than you think!
- It is important that you see us regularly and do **NOT miss** appointments, as braces can adversely move teeth and cause damage if unsupervised. Also, every appointment that you miss gets added on to the end of treatment, so you may not be done when we originally told you.
- Give us at least **24 hours notice** if you need to reschedule, otherwise we will charge you a no-show fee. When you miss an appointment without telling us, that is a spot that another patient could have had.
- Be **on time**! We usually have a good deal of things we need to get done in an appointment, and if you miss any of that time, we may have to put of doing things until your next visit. This can result in added treatment time as well.

4. If you have discomfort

- Usually you will be sore for a **few days** after getting your braces. The soreness will often peak the next day and then start to decrease.
- Take **advil** (ibuprofen) or **tylenol** (acetaminophen) as directed on the box as needed for pain.
- Try eating **softer foods** that are not hard to chew for the first few days. We recommend foods like: mashed potatoes, yogurt, mac and cheese, soup, smoothies, pasta, rice, eggs, applesauce, pudding, jell-o, ice cream, milkshakes, cheese, oatmeal, steamed veggies, pancakes, waffles, soft bread, or tortillas.
- Use **wax** for any bracket or wire that is rubbing your cheek or lip. Wax does not like saliva, so try to dry your tooth off as much as possible before you put it on. Roll a small piece into a ball and stick it on whatever is bothering you to make it smooth.
- It normally takes **1-2 weeks** for you to get used to your new appliances. So be patient, this is normal!

5. If you have a problem

- If you have a **broken bracket** that is sliding around: put some wax on the bracket to stabilize it. This is not a true emergency, but we want to fix it as soon as we can. If you have a regularly scheuduled appointment within the next week or two, we can usually fix it then. But if you are more than 2 weeks away, please call and make a quick appointment to have this fixed.
- If a **wire is poking**: Check and see if you have a bracket broken/missing in the back. If you do and there is a long piece of wire, you can usually have someone help you to clip the wire with fingernail clippers or wire cutters. If there is no broken bracket and the wire is just sticking out a little bit from the back of the bracket, call our office to come in for a quick appointment to have the wire clipped.
- If an **appliance breaks**/comes loose: Please call our office and come in for an appointment to have us look at it as soon as possible.
- We have great assistants who are on call should you have any problems or emergencies. You may text our appointment line at **(229) 264-4919** with a brief summary or photo of what's going on**.**
- Remember that a true orthodontic emergency is very rare. We can usually manage any problems you have over the phone and help get you comfortable until our next available appointment.

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