

Guide to your new BRACES

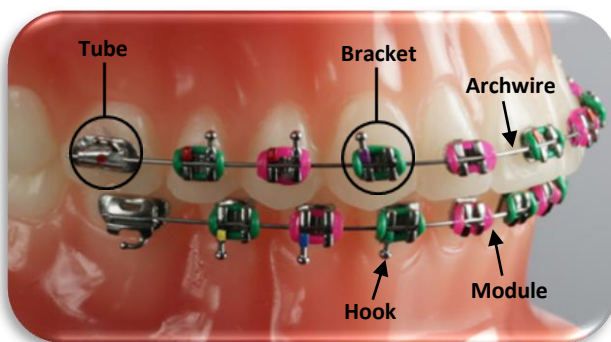
Congratulations on having your braces fitted! Here is some important information to help you on your journey to your new smile.

Co-operation moves teeth!

Orthodontics is very different from regular dentistry. The success of the treatment depends on a partnership between you, the assistants and the orthodontist. Everyone has a job. Your job is to care for your braces by maintaining good oral hygiene, eating the right foods, attending your appointments as scheduled and wearing elastics or any other appliances as directed.

Parts of your braces

An orthodontic appliance is a very precise set of tiny parts. Here are the main parts of your braces:



- Bracket:** This is the “brace” and is the part that is glued to your tooth. The bracket holds the archwire against your tooth
- Tube:** This is the attachment on the back teeth that the archwire slides through.
- Archwire:** Teeth move from the pressure that the archwire exerts on the braces and it guides the direction of movement.
- Modules:** Small o-shaped rubber rings that hold the archwire into each bracket. These can be silver or a variety of colours.
- Chain:** This is a series of modules that are joined together and are used to move teeth along the archwire and to close spaces.
- Hooks:** Some of the brackets and the tubes have hooks attached. These are used to attach elastics to your braces when we begin to correct your bite.

Will my teeth hurt?

A few hours after having your braces fitted you will get some tenderness and aching in your teeth. It’s like having a headache – in your teeth. Pain relief such as paracetamol and ibuprofen can help. Eating soft food that doesn’t require much chewing will help.

What if my braces feel sharp?

It is normal for braces to irritate the cheeks and lips for the first few days. Think of it like breaking in a new pair of shoes! After a short time, your cheeks and lips toughen up and the braces will no longer bother you. In the meantime, break off a small piece of the provided wax and place it on the sharp area. Dry the area first, otherwise the wax won’t stick very well.

Do I still need to see my dentist during orthodontic treatment?

Yes, absolutely! It is very important to have regular check-ups and cleans **every 6 months** during your orthodontic treatment to maintain the health of your teeth and gums.

Do I need a mouthguard?

A mouthguard is essential for contact sports. We recommend a pharmacy one that you can re-mould over your braces as your teeth move. Once your braces are removed, a custom-made mouthguard can be fitted by your dentist.

What if something breaks?

First of all, don't panic! A broken brace is not an emergency but call us as soon as you know something is wrong and we can schedule a time to repair it. Some common problems and what to do are outlined here:

A loose bracket: Often the loose bracket stays on the wire as it attached by the module. If it is uncomfortable, place some wax over the bracket. Do call and let us know so we can schedule a time to re-glue it as teeth do not move if the braces are not attached!

A module has fallen off: If the little coloured circle falls off, have a look in the mirror. Is the archwire still sitting in the bracket? If not, we would like to replace the module within a few days so please call us for an appointment.

Wire poking your cheek: As the teeth straighten, sometimes some wire will poke out the back of the tube. Place some wax over the sharp wire and call us to schedule a time to have it trimmed.

Wire comes out of the tube: Sometimes the flexible initial wires can come out of the tube at the back. As they are very flexible you may be able to re-insert it yourself. Otherwise, simply tuck the wire under the hook until you can come in and have the wire re-inserted.

Broken archwire: It is very unusual for an archwire to break and is usually the result of eating hard foods! It doesn't usually cause any discomfort but does need to be replaced with a new one.

Appointments

Orthodontic appliances must be adjusted every 4-8 weeks for treatment to proceed as planned. Early morning and late afternoon appointments are reserved for VCE students and adults who cannot arrange time off during the day. This means that younger patients will inevitably miss a little school time, but we do our best to run on time to ensure that this is minimal. Because the schedule is carefully crafted, arriving late or missing appointments can pose a problem as it may not be possible to fit you in between scheduled appointments for our other patients. In fairness to these patients it may be necessary to reschedule your appointment. Please let us know as far in advance as possible if you are unable to keep an appointment or if you are likely to be late. This will enable us to find a suitable time and not disrupt the continuity of your treatment.

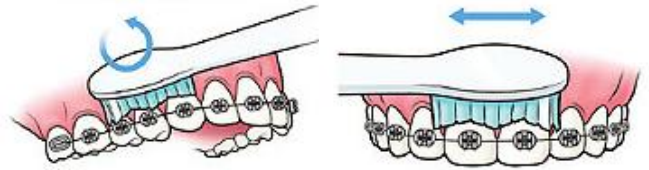
Along with failure to wear elastics, missed appointments are a major reason for treatment running beyond anticipated treatment time.

If you are having problems with the braces or something has broken, we will bring you in as soon as possible to correct the problem.

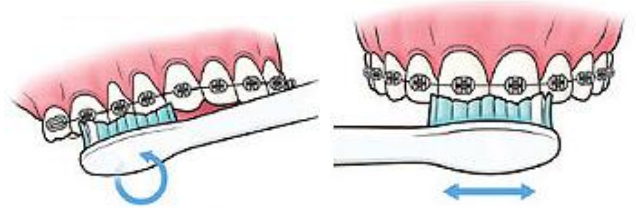
Brushing with braces

Permanent stains, cavities and gum disease are all caused by bacteria that live on teeth in a colourless sticky substance called plaque, which must be removed every day. Braces create nooks and crannies that are hard to reach and trap plaque - therefore the brushing technique is different and will take more time.

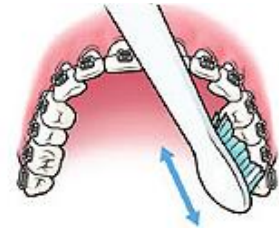
1. Using a SOFT brush, brush the gums (above the braces). The brush should be placed against the teeth at an angle. The bristles should be pushed under the wire and between the teeth. The brush should then be vibrated and moved in small circles in each area of the mouth.



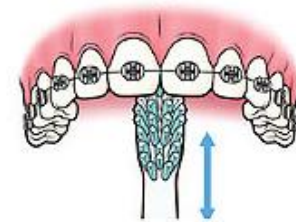
2. Brush below the braces using the same circular motion. Don't forget to brush on top of the braces!



3. Brush the chewing surfaces, all the way to the back!



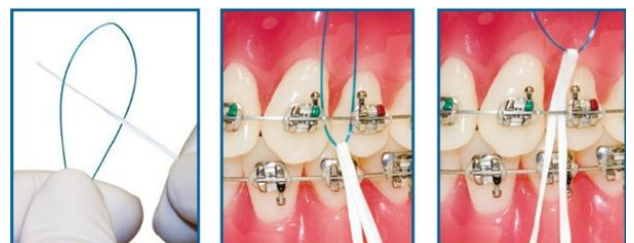
4. Brush the inside (lingual) surfaces using a circular or flicking motion.



5. Clean under the archwire using an interproximal brush (e.g. Pikster)



6. Clean between all your teeth using a small interdental brush or dental floss and a floss threader.



When the brushing is finished, the braces and teeth should be free of food particles and plaque. The braces should be shiny, the gum margin should be distinct and gum tissue should be firm and a light pink colour. Good electric toothbrushes can be very effective.

Without careful brushing and flossing, gums develop gingivitis and have a reddish colour at the gum margin and bleed when brushed or flossed – but they may not hurt. If treated properly at this stage, they can still return to a normal healthy condition. With continued neglect, gums develop periodontal disease which causes bad breath and permanent damage to the gums and bone around the teeth - this development still may not hurt!