

Guide to Keeping Your Teeth and Gums Healthy During Orthodontic Treatment

Why you have been given this leaflet:

This leaflet provides additional written advice to help you achieve good oral hygiene when cleaning your teeth and fixed brace. This is to ensure that you minimise the risk of progressive decay, permanent staining of the teeth and gum disease.

Gum disease:

Gum disease can be caused by many factors however poor oral hygiene is the most common cause. Not brushing your teeth correctly and regularly can cause plaque to accumulate. Plaque is a sticky substance that contains bacteria. If plaque is not removed the bacteria and the plaque will irritate your gums making them inflamed, puffy and sore. This is gum disease. When gum disease is not treated it may develop further into periodontitis, which can lead to tooth loss. Have a good inspection of your gums. Are they red or swollen? Do they bleed when you brush them?

If your gums bleed when you brush they are doing so because they are sick. They may be sore and swollen. Do not panic, the best way to treat gum disease is good oral hygiene. Follow the step by step guide each time you brush your teeth and you should be able to achieve optimal oral health. Remember healthy gums do not bleed

Brushing technique:

Brush above and below the braces.

Use a soft toothbrush with a fluoride toothpaste.

Brush around and between the brackets using a smaller single tufted brush.

Brush every surface of your teeth including the biting surfaces and the inside surfaces.

Remember to brush next to the gums (this means the brush will touch the gums). Remember to brush around the arch wire.

Brushing should take 4 to 5 minutes.

General Oral Hygiene Advice:

Your braces, teeth and gums should be cleaned at least three times a day and after every meal. This is due to bacteria in food and plaque turning sugary substances into acid. This acid can make holes in your teeth. This is tooth decay. Any sugars should be restricted to mealtimes only or ideally not at all. Eating and drinking sugary substances raises your risk of tooth decay and gum disease. If you need to snack between meals try a healthier sugar free alternative. Decay cannot be prevented by toothbrushing alone it must be combined with a healthy diet.

Fizzy and acidic drinks:

Fizzy drinks, fruit juices and sports drinks contain acid. Even sugar free drinks contain acid. These acids can dissolve the enamel (outer layer) of the teeth causing erosion and permanent staining.

Fluoride:

Fluoride helps to prevent and control cavities so it is recommended that your toothpaste contains fluoride. Use a pea size amount of toothpaste on your toothbrush each time you brush.

Mouthwash:

Fluoride alcohol free mouthwash is recommended as an additional preventative measure against decay and should be combined with good tooth brushing not as an alternative. Choose a separate time to use your mouthwash and follow the

instructions on the bottle. Always read the contents of the mouthwash as many contain alcohol.

Brushes:

A soft toothbrush is recommended for cleaning teeth fitted with fixed appliances.

A single tufted toothbrush is recommended to brush the area under the wires and between the brackets.

An Interdental toothbrush (such as TePe brush) can also be used to clean the interdental area between the teeth

Disclosing tablets:

Plaque disclosing tablets are a useful way of highlighting plaque in the mouth. They work by dyeing the plaque in the mouth making it easier to see where you may be missing when you brush. You should aim to remove all the dyed plaque.

We are here to help you. If you have any questions or need any further advice please contact us or talk to your orthodontist at your next appointment. We want to give you the best possible treatment and with your commitment together we can achieve optimal results