



Life with Braces

Adjusting to Braces

For the first few days after braces or wires are placed, the teeth are usually tender and sore. The discomfort can be relieved with ibuprofen or similar over-the-counter medication. The lips, tongue, and cheeks may also be sore for the first one to two weeks as they adjust to the surface of the braces. Placing wax over the braces as directed will help relieve the discomfort. Rinsing with warm salt water will also speed up the adjustment process. Dissolve one teaspoon of salt in eight ounces of warm water and rinse for thirty seconds twice per day.

Brushing and Flossing

It's more important than ever to brush and floss regularly when you have braces, so the teeth and gums are healthy after orthodontic treatment. Food tends to accumulate around braces, especially near the gumline. If the teeth are not cleaned as directed, stains, cavities, or gum problems may develop. After the braces are placed, instructions will be given in brushing and flossing. Even while under the care of an orthodontist, it is essential to continue to see a regular dentist at least every six months during treatment. Patients who do not keep their teeth clean may require more frequent visits to the dentist for a professional cleaning. Adults who have a history of gum disease should also see a periodontist during orthodontic treatment.

Loosening of Teeth

During orthodontic treatment, it is normal for teeth periodically to become loose as they are repositioned. In fact, teeth must loosen or become mobile prior to being moved. The teeth will lose this mobility after tooth movement has slowed or after braces are removed.

Care of Appliances

To successfully complete the treatment plan, the patient must work together with the orthodontist. The teeth and jaws can only move toward their corrected positions if the patient consistently wears the rubber bands, headgear, or other appliances as prescribed. Damaged appliances lengthen the treatment time.

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