

## CARING FOR YOUR SMILE WITH BRACES

*You just got Orthodontic Appliances-Now what?*

### THE FIRST FEW DAYS

As your mouth adjusts to the appliances that we have placed, it is normal to feel soreness during the first few days. Try to eat soft foods and you may wish to take a mild, non-prescription pain reliever (aspirin, Tylenol or ibuprofen) until the tenderness subsides. For maximum effectiveness, it may be best to take such medications before the discomfort begins. Tenderness will vary from patient to patient, however, most soreness should be gone within a few days.

### EATING SUGGESTIONS

#### **Smaller, Softer & Slower:**

This will make chewing easier for you and less uncomfortable if your teeth are sore. Cutting your food into small pieces will minimize the amount of chewing. Softer foods will make it much easier to chew. By eating slower you will decrease the likelihood of biting your tongue and cheek.

### WAX

Although the brackets have been rounded and smoothed, you may find it helpful to use a large piece of wax around the bracket. We will give you a supply of wax at the start of treatment, and you can always call our office for more if your supply of wax runs out.

#### *Eating Guidelines*

A careful orthodontic patient can probably eat almost any food without doing damage to his/her appliances. However, these three types of food can cause trouble by bending wires, breaking braces, and loosening the cement that attaches the appliances to your teeth:

1. Hard Foods
2. Sticky Foods
3. Foods High in Sugar

### HARD FOODS

#### **Avoid hard foods similar to the following:**

Hard bread, ice, popcorn, jawbreakers, jolly ranchers, hard pretzels, croutons, whole nuts, and hard taco shells.

#### **Take special care when eating these foods:**

##### **Apples, peaches, plums**

If possible, cut into wedges and chew on back teeth.

##### **Bagels, hard breads, pizza crust**

Break into bite size pieces.

##### **Carrots, celery, raw veggies**

Cut into small pieces that are thinner and chew on back teeth.

**Corn on the cob**

Should be cut off the cob.

**STICKY FOODS****Avoid sticky foods similar to the following:**

Any type of Gum, Caramels, Sugar Daddy's, Starburst, and Taffy.

**FOODS HIGH IN SUGAR**

Limit the amount of sugary foods you eat. Sugar can increase the plaque that forms on your teeth, causing cavities and permanent white marks. Many foods, like breakfast cereals, have hidden sugars. If you do choose to eat sugary foods, please brush immediately after. Avoid between meal snacking. The worst thing you can do is drink soda or eat crackers and chips between meals without brushing!!!

*A Few Other Things***Soft Drinks and Lemons**

Soft drinks and lemons contain a substance that can cause permanent damage to the enamel on your teeth. If you decide to drink soft drinks or eat lemons, we recommend that you brush thoroughly to decrease the possibility of damage. If you are unable to brush, please rinse your mouth with water.

**Foreign Objects**

Do not bite or chew on pens, pencils or popsicle sticks. These objects may break brackets, bend wires, and loosen cement.

**Mouthguards**

If you play sports, always remember to wear a mouthguard. Be sure to talk with us about your individual needs.

*Brushing and Flossing*

The parts of your teeth that are covered by orthodontic bands or brackets are protected from decay, as long as the bands are not loose. The area that tends to cause the most problems is the "shelf" where brackets, tubes, and wires stick out away from the teeth. This "shelf" makes it harder to clean the spaces between your gums and the orthodontic appliances. If you don't get these areas clean, the gums swell, get puffy and become even harder to clean. Continued neglect of these areas may result in tooth decay, permanent staining or decalcification of your teeth, and gum disease.

**BRUSHING**

- Brush within 5 minutes after every meal. (Easy to say, hard to do! Take a travel toothbrush wherever you go.)
- Use a soft bristle brush to prevent gum recession.
- Initially, brush back and forth across the gums and teeth to remove food particles.

- Then, brush in a circular motion between braces and under gums, a few teeth at a time.
- Brush 10 times in each area before moving on, Scrub the chewing surfaces last.
- Brush the roof of your mouth and your tongue.
- Rinse your mouth and look in the mirror to check the half-moon spaces of the teeth between the bands and the gums.
- When you are finished, the bands should be shiny and free of all food particles and white coatings. If you see red, swollen gums, take special care to massage them with your toothbrush.
- Electric toothbrushes with a timer are excellent tools that make cleaning easier. We highly recommend their use for all orthodontic patients.

## **FLOSSING**

- Daily flossing is very important!
- Tie the floss to the end of the floss threader and direct the floss threader under the arch wire.
- Wrap the ends of the floss around your index fingers.
- Wrap a “C” around the tooth and firmly guide the floss along the sides of the tooth and under the gum line.
- Repeat this procedure for each tooth.

## **FLUORIDE**

- The use of topical fluoride can aid in the prevention of tooth decay and decalcification (white marks on the teeth).
- We recommend that our patients use a fluoride rinse in the evening before bed while they are wearing orthodontic appliances.

## **VISITING YOUR FAMILY DENTIST**

- It is very important to see your dentist before, during, and after orthodontic treatment.
- Follow up with regular cleanings approximately every four (4) to six (6) months.
- Please remember that your appointments with us do not take the place of your regular dental checkups with your family dentist.
- If you do not have a family dentist, we would be happy to give you the names of several in your area.

*In Case of Emergency...*

## **EMERGENCIES REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION**

