

## Caring for your Braces

### Oral Hygiene

We want to give you a beautiful, healthy smile. We don't want to straighten your teeth only to remove the braces and see evidence of tooth decay. Unfortunately, braces collect food as you eat. If this food isn't removed after each meal, plaque forms and can lead to decalcification. Decalcification is permanent white markings on your teeth that over time can lead to tooth decay.



If plaque is present it can also lead to gum disease. The gums will appear red and swollen and will bleed during brushing. Once you have gingivitis, your teeth will not move as easily and you may experience discomfort during your adjustment appointments.

### Brushing

The most effective way to reduce plaque buildup is to clean your teeth with a soft bristled toothbrush, at least 3 times a day. Be sure to aim the bristles underneath the bracket and wires, and also pay attention to brushing your gum line. Most decalcification occurs in the area between the wire and gum line, as this is where plaque tends to accumulate. Make sure all visible plaque has been removed after brushing. A Water Pik is beneficial in flushing plaque and food from around the braces. We highly recommend purchasing one and using it daily.

### Flossing

Flossing is still necessary when wearing braces and helps remove plaque that may remain between your teeth. Use your floss threader and floss at least 3 times a week.

### Fluoride Mouth Rinse

The use of a daily fluoride mouth rinse (such as A.C.T. or Listerine Total Care) significantly reduces the possibility of tooth decay. We recommend using a rinse before bed time. Follow the directions outlined on the bottle.

***It is very important to continue to see your family dentist for routine cleanings and check-ups while in treatment. More frequent cleaning appointments with your dentist (every 3-4 months) reduces the risk of decalcification and gingivitis while in treatment. If oral hygiene becomes an issue we may insist you see your dentist every 3 months to prevent decalcification, tooth decay and gingivitis.***