



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Orthodontics: Wearing Braces

Braces are a type of appliance or device that can move teeth into the correct position. This is done by putting pressure on the teeth.

The orthodontist glues metal or clear ceramic brackets to the teeth. Then, they attach wires to the brackets. The wires are adjusted -tightened or loosened, over time to move the teeth. You may also need to use special rubber bands to put more pressure on the teeth. They help the teeth line up with the jaw.

Keeping Your Braces Clean

It's very important to keep your braces, teeth, and gums clean. If you don't, plaque can build up around the brackets. Plaque can cause cavities, white or brown spots (decalcification), and puffy, red gums (gingivitis). To prevent this from happening:

- Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste for 2 minutes, 2 times each day. Your orthodontist or dentist may prescribe a high fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush after all meals. If you can't brush your teeth at school, then rinse your mouth with water after eating.
- Floss your teeth 1 time each day.

Foods to Avoid

- Braces are strong, but certain foods can damage them. **Do not eat these foods:**
 - Sticky foods: caramel, chewy candy, and gum.
 - Crunchy foods: chips, ice, popcorn, and raw vegetables.
 - Foods that you bite with your front teeth: whole apples, carrot sticks, corn on the cob, meats on the bone.
 - Hard foods: nuts, pretzels, hard or crusty bread, dried meat, and dried fruit.

Foods to Eat

- These foods are less likely to damage your braces:
 - Dairy: soft cheese, pudding, and yogurt.
 - Grains: soft tortillas, sandwich bread, pancakes, rice, and pasta.
 - Meat and seafood: ground, shredded, or cut into small pieces.
 - Vegetables: mashed potatoes, steamed veggies, beans, corn removed from cob.
 - Fruits: berries, grapes, applesauce, bananas, and oranges.
 - Treats: ice cream, milkshakes, smoothies, and cake.

Life with Braces

- When you first get braces, it might be hard to eat and talk. These will get easier to do over time.
- You can still do most or all of your normal activities with braces. This includes sports or playing a musical instrument.
 - Wear a mouth guard to protect your teeth and braces when doing active sports.
 - Ask your orthodontist or their assistant to help you find the right mouth guard.
- Even with proper care and precautions, braces can get loose or broken and poke into your gums.
 - Put orthodontic wax over a loose or broken wire or bracket to keep it from poking, rubbing, or hurting places in your mouth.
 - If you have mouth sores, wax can help protect your gums and mouth from more injuries.
- If a bracket comes off a tooth or a wire comes loose, breaks, or pokes your mouth, call our office at (614) 722-5602, anytime during the day or evening, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. **Please do not send an urgent message through MyChart®.** If someone doesn't answer, leave a detailed voicemail with:
 - The patient's name.
 - How to best reach you.
 - What the problem is.

Adjusting the Braces

- The orthodontist will adjust your braces by tightening or loosening them every 4 to 8 weeks.
- It's normal to feel some discomfort after each adjustment. This can last for 24 to 48 hours. To help relieve pain, take over-the-counter (OTC) pain medicine like ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) or acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Read the label to know the right dose.
- Before leaving the orthodontist's office, make sure there are no wires poking your lips, tongue, gums, or cheeks. Tell the assistant if anything feels wrong.

Routine Dental Care

- It's important to keep seeing your regular dentist every 6 months for routine exams and teeth cleaning.
- If you do not have a regular dentist, let us know, and we can help you find one.