

LEARNING ABOUT BRACES



I. PARTS OF BRACES AND HOW THEY WORK

Bands – these bigger braces are actually rings of metal that are glued around the entire tooth. They are mainly used on the back molars because they are tougher than brackets and are less likely to break during normal chewing.

Brackets – smaller braces that are glued onto the front of teeth. These are mainly used on the front incisors and the side teeth but can also be used on the molars as well (instead of bands).

Wires – the wires provide the forces that actually move the teeth. So really the bands and brackets are simply “holders” that allow the wires to do the work of moving teeth.

O-rings – the colors seen on braces are actually little rubber “O-rings” that help to hold the wire in place on the brackets. In some cases, we use special “self-ligating” brackets that have very small “doors” that can be opened and closed to hold the wire in place instead of using “O-rings”.

Power chains – these are a series of “O-rings” hooked together and are used to close the gaps that sometime exist between the teeth.

II. THE FIRST FEW DAYS: WHAT TO EXPECT/WHAT TO DO

The first few days of having braces can often be a bit uncomfortable. Your teeth will usually get sore/tender as they begin to move (they will also become a bit loose and this is perfectly normal!). In addition, your cheeks, tongue and lips will get sore and irritated as they get used to the presence of the braces. Please do not judge your entire orthodontic experience by these first few days! Things will get much better as time goes on and you get used to your braces.

Here are a few tips to help you deal with some of these issues:

Sore teeth:

- Tylenol or Advil (as directed and if no allergies to them) if needed for 2-3 days.
- Stay active and stick to your normal routine as much as possible to keep your mind off of the braces and on other things.
- You still need to eat but probably go with softer foods for these first few days.
- Keep in mind that your teeth will usually get sore to some extent after each orthodontic adjustment but this typically only lasts for 2-3 days and your regular adjustments are usually 6 weeks apart. This means that your teeth will actually only be sore for a very small percentage of the time that you are wearing braces!



Braces rubbing cheeks/lips/tongue:

- try placing wax on the part of the braces that is rubbing the sore area. The wax may come off - especially when eating - but simply replace it as needed. **Hint:** the drier you can keep the area, the better the wax will stick.
- If a sore area persists for more than a few days, call our office to come in and get this checked out.

Loose brace and/or loose wire:

- if not hurting, call our office to schedule a time to come in for a repair appointment.
- If hurting, call our office for an "emergency" appointment. If the office is closed, you will be given the contact information of the emergency person on call (usually this will be Dr. Lowe).

III. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PATIENT (AND PARENT)

Good Oral Hygiene and a Healthy Diet: A combination of good oral hygiene and a healthy diet is absolutely essential in preventing damage to your teeth and gums while wearing braces. This is such an important issue that we have devoted an entire separate hand out and video to it. Please see the separate hand-out and/or video entitled "Preventing Cavities, White Spots and Gum Problems While in Braces".

Making and Keeping Regular Appointments: Make sure you keep your appointments so you can be seen on a regular monthly basis to ensure your treatment proceeds in a timely manner. Habitually missing appointments can greatly increase the amount of time spent wearing braces. If you do miss an appointment or if you need to change an appointment, please try to get it rescheduled as soon as possible.

Preventing Damage to Your Braces: Please try your best to avoid hard/sticky foods (such as ice, hard candy, etc.) and habits (such as nail biting or "pen chewing") that can damage and/or loosen your braces and slow your treatment progress. Not only can habitual broken appliances drastically increase the time you have to wear braces, but they also require extra trips to our office - often at times that are inconvenient for both you and us. NOTE: It is ok - and can even be helpful - to chew sugarless gum as long as it is soft right out of the package.

Following Treatment Instructions: Whether it be wearing elastics or other appliances during braces or wearing retainers after braces, good patient cooperation is essential to get the best possible result and to maintain that result.

Regular Appointments with your Family Dentist: Even though you are seeing the orthodontist on a monthly basis, you still need to see your general dentist for regular cleanings and check-ups to ensure that your teeth and gums stay healthy.



IT TAKES A TEAM EFFORT! We promise that our office will always do our part. Now it's up to you to do your part so that you can get a GREAT RESULT in as short amount of time as possible!

