

PREVENTING

White Spots, Cavities and Gum Problems During Orthodontic Treatment



First, we need a quick but very important biology lesson. Everyone has bacteria in their bodies and certain types of bacteria are actually good for us as they help to keep us healthy. But some forms of bacteria in the mouth – often referred to as “plaque” – can cause damage to your teeth and gums in the form of “white spots” (they can also be brown, yellow or gray), cavities and gum disease. When plaque and sugar are allowed to remain on the teeth for too long, the bacteria eat the sugar and then secrete an acid that causes damage to the teeth and gums. Orthodontic patients are especially susceptible to these problems because the presence of braces provides more “nooks and crannies” in which the plaque and sugar can hide. Keep in mind that once orthodontic “white spots” form, they cannot usually be removed and essentially become permanent scars that can severely compromise an otherwise great smile.

Listed below are several important keys in preventing damage to your teeth during orthodontic treatment:

BRUSH, BRUSH, BRUSH AND THEN BRUSH SOME MORE!

How? Be very thorough and make sure you brush the braces and teeth from multiple angles. It is especially important to concentrate on the area between the braces and gums as this is where white spots most often occur. Also be sure that you are systematic with your brushing by concentrating on one area of 2-3 teeth at a time and making sure they are very clean before moving to the next section of teeth.

How long? While there is no set duration for everyone, keep in mind that the presence of braces means there are more places for plaque to hide and this means thorough brushing will take significantly longer. We recommend that you spend at least 2-3 minutes each time you brush and more if possible. Even if you have to “cheat” sometimes and brush quickly, please do not cut corners at bedtime- ALWAYS brush thoroughly before going to bed!

How often? With braces, you really can't brush too often but we want you to brush at least 2-3 times per day and hopefully more! You should brush in the morning and ALWAYS brush before bed and as many other times throughout the day as time and convenience allows.



FLOSS AS OFTEN AS REASONABLY POSSIBLE.

You will need to use a floss threader or “super floss” to thread the floss under the wire in order to floss correctly. Because this must be done at each flossing site, flossing with braces obviously will take time. Of course we hope that you will be able to floss daily but we find that many of our patients seem to do fine flossing every other day or so.

MINIMIZE SUGAR IN YOUR DIET.

The Amount of Sugar – We understand that just about any food or drink that tastes good usually has sugar in it and it would certainly not be practical (or very much fun) to totally cut sugar from your diet. However, we do ask that you try to limit your overall sugar intake as much as reasonably possible. One of the best ways to do this is to drink more water and less “sugar drinks” (soda, tea, sports drinks and even juices are loaded with sugar).

The Duration – While limiting your overall sugar intake is important, it’s perhaps even more important to minimize the time that the sugar stays on your teeth. Whenever you eat or drink, try to brush your teeth as soon as possible! When you cannot brush, at least try to rinse with water and/or chew sugarless gum to help neutralize the sugar/plaque as much as possible. And again, ALWAYS brush thoroughly before going to bed so that the sugar/plaque is not there to damage your teeth during the night.

FLUORIDE TO STRENGTHEN YOUR TEETH

Phosflur Rinse by Colgate – We strongly recommend that our patients rinse with Phosflur each night prior to going to bed as this will help to prevent white spots and/or decay. This should be the very last thing you do before getting into bed. After brushing thoroughly (and getting that last drink of water), rinse with Phosflur to coat your teeth with fluoride that will help protect them overnight. The first bottle is on us and after that we charge \$8.00/ bottle (It can cost \$12.00 or more in stores).

Fluoride Treatments from Your Dentist - fluoride treatments at your regular dental visits are also a very important part of preventing damage to your teeth.



Remember to see your dentist for regular cleanings and exams throughout your orthodontic treatment!

