

# EXPERT ADVICE

## Oral Hygiene and Braces

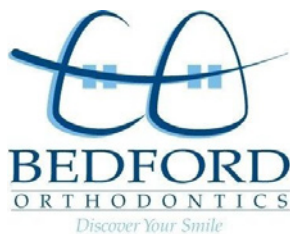


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We all know how important it is to brush and floss to keep gums and teeth in tiptop shape. Most of us are also aware that in recent years several studies have shown that the health of our teeth and gums is linked to our systemic health. It is therefore necessary to ensure that once your orthodontic treatment starts, you keep up good oral hygiene at home and see your dentist regularly for cleanings and check ups.



You may wonder how oral hygiene at home will change with braces. Initially, braces can be a bit of a speed bump for the toothbrush and floss. The brackets on the teeth that hold the wire in place do add more surface area, and plaque may settle in if not cleaned properly. It is easy to remove plaque from around the brackets but it can take more time. A lot of our patients ask us if powered toothbrushes or manual are best — our experience and studies show that whatever you prefer works best, as long as you take the time to clean the surface of each tooth carefully and brush at least twice a day. Fluoridated toothpaste is highly recommended to reduce the risk of cavities, whether you have braces or not. At each visit, our clinical team will evaluate how well you are cleaning your teeth at home and will make recommendations to ensure your teeth and gums are clean and healthy, and that your oral hygiene routine is easy.

While you are in braces, it will also take more time for you to floss around each tooth, as a wire runs between each tooth from bracket to bracket. In fact, special tools like a floss threader or special floss called Superfloss may be required to

get underneath the wire and access the area in between the teeth. Flossing is extremely important — if you don't floss, you miss cleaning approximately 60 per cent of the tooth surfaces.

Our patients that have Invisalign aligners find their oral hygiene routine takes about the same amount of time as it did before orthodontics. This is because their aligners are removed for brushing and flossing. However, most Invisalign patients have an attachment on one or more teeth. These are customized, tiny tooth-coloured resin build-ups on the teeth that are designed by the orthodontist and Invisalign to assist in moving the specific teeth. Like brackets or braces, these add another surface area for plaque to adhere to and must be brushed carefully and gently. Flossing during Invisalign treatment is easy — there are no wires and no attachments in the way of the floss.

Poor oral hygiene can lead to cavities, inflamed and diseased gums and bone surrounding the teeth, and unsightly white spot lesions that are permanent. All these can be avoided with brushing, flossing and regular cleanings with your dentist. ■