

# Oral Hygiene

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**Brushing:** Use a toothbrush with soft bristles and fluoride toothpaste. Brush your teeth in small, circular motions to reach particles that may be under your gum line. Brush slowly and carefully, covering all areas of the teeth and braces. Brush up on the lower teeth and down on the upper teeth. Be sure to brush your tongue and the roof of your mouth before you rinse.

Dr. Dillehay also recommends that you replace your toothbrush frequently. When the bristles start to wear down, replace your toothbrush with a new one. A fresh toothbrush will help you maintain a high standard of oral hygiene.

**Flossing:** Flossing takes dedication and patience when you are wearing braces, but it is important to floss your teeth *every day*.

Use a floss threader to floss under the archwire. Pull a small length of floss from the dispenser through the threader and slide it up and down along the front of each tooth. You will hear the squeak of the floss against your clean teeth. Do not floss too forcefully around the archwire: too much pressure can cause damage to your appliance. After flossing between archwire and braces, floss between your other teeth and gums.

If you are flossing without the floss threader, wrap the ends of the floss tightly around your middle fingers. Guide the floss between all teeth, pulling out food particles and plaque. Unwrap clean floss from around your fingers as you go. Remember to floss behind all of your back teeth. It is important to floss and use an antibacterial mouthwash and fluoride treatment throughout your orthodontic treatment and beyond for optimal oral hygiene.

## Brushing Tips

Dr. Dillehay recommends that you brush your teeth 4 times daily to prevent the accumulation of food particles in your braces:

- In the morning (after breakfast)
- After lunch or after school
- After dinner
- Before bed

## Flossing Tips

Your toothbrush won't reach all the areas that food accumulates in. Use dental floss to remove hard-to-reach food particles and plaque. When you first begin flossing around your braces, your gums may bleed. If the bleeding does not subside after the first few times, please let us know.



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