

Toothbrushing With Braces

Keeping your mouth healthy is very important. By looking after your teeth and gums you can avoid tooth decay and gum disease.

What is tooth decay?

When you eat or drink something sugary, the bacteria in your mouth produce acid. This acid can make holes in your teeth (tooth decay).

What is gum disease?

Gum disease is caused by bacteria that stick to your teeth when you do not clean them properly. Dentists call this layer of bacteria **plaque**. If you leave plaque on your teeth, your gums will become red, swollen, sore and may bleed when you brush them. You may have bad breath. If gum disease is not treated the teeth will become loose and may eventually fall out.

How should I keep my mouth healthy?

- You should keep your teeth and gums clean. Good brushing is very important.
- You should avoid sugary foods and drinks between meals.
- You should cut down on fizzy and acidic drinks.

How should I brush my teeth and gums?

- Brush your teeth three times per day.
- Use a toothpaste containing fluoride.
- Choose a toothbrush with a small head to help reach every part of your mouth.
- Brush every surface of the tooth.
- Make sure the bristles reach the part of the tooth where it joins the gum. This is where plaque collects.
- Move the toothbrush in small gentle circular or scrubbing movements.
- Dental floss or inter-dental brushes may be helpful to clean in between your teeth.
- Use disclosing tablets which contain a harmless dye to stain plaque making it easier to see for removal.
- **For more information on toothbrushing technique and oral hygiene products, please visit our website www.kmortho.co.uk / Patient Information / Oral Hygiene.**

Is an electric tooth brush better?

Using an electric toothbrush can be fun, but it will only work well if you use it properly. It is not a magic wand! Use the type of brush that works best for you.

Why should I avoid sugary foods and drinks between meals?

Every time you eat or drink something sugary, the bacteria in your mouth will produce acid. Acid attacks can last for up to an hour after eating or drinking. The more often you eat or drink something sugary, the more likely you are to cause tooth decay. Try to cut down the number of times you have sugary foods or drinks by keeping these to mealtimes.

Why are fizzy and acidic drinks bad for my teeth?

Fruit juices, sports drinks and fizzy drinks (even sugar-free ones) contain acids. These acids can dissolve the outer surface of the teeth (enamel). This is called erosion. The teeth become thinner and are more likely to chip. They may also become sensitive. The more often you drink fizzy or acidic drinks, the more likely you are to damage your teeth.

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