
Taking Care of Your Braces



Congratulations!

You are on your way to an amazing smile. Dr. Lundner will do everything he can to give you a world class smile as quickly as he can, but he needs your help to make it happen. We have put these instructions together for you to make the voyage a little quicker and easier. We will also give you a braces hygiene kit to help you take care of them.

What Your Braces Do

The braces, or brackets, serve as a way of connecting your teeth to the wires. The wires are shaped like an ideal jaw, and that is what will make your teeth straight. The wires also serve as a track so that we can close or open space as needed.

Getting Used to Your Braces – Will it Hurt?

Your braces will feel a little funny at first. It takes about 1-2 weeks to get used to them. At first you may feel some pressure, but no discomfort. After a few hours the pressure will gradually turn into soreness. It will NOT be a sharp, needle-like type of pain. To help alleviate any discomfort, we recommend taking whatever medicine you normally take for mild pain (Advil/Ibuprofen, Tylenol, or Aspirin). After 2-3 days, the discomfort will go away, but don't worry, your teeth are still moving! You will have this same type discomfort for 2-3 days each time we adjust your braces.

If the braces irritate your cheeks, place a small pinball of wax over them. Your cheeks will "toughen up" after a week or so and it will no longer be a problem.

Why Are My Braces Positioned Close to My Gums?

Some orthodontists position braces closer to the edge of the teeth, which does make it a little easier to brush. However, doing this on the top braces makes the smile not look as good. Dr. Lundner takes tremendous pride in using positioning that maximizes the "Smile Arc," which is the key to showing the top teeth when one smiles for a more attractive and youthful appearance. For the bottom braces, positioning them close to the edge of the tooth makes them more vulnerable to hit the edges of the top teeth, which can cause the bottom braces to break, or can wear down the edges of the top teeth. Dr. Lundner wants you to have an amazing and healthy smile.

How Can You Get Your Braces Off Faster?

By following these instruction your treatment will go faster, and your final smile will look better. Think of each broken brace as possibly an extra month of treatment. That means six broken braces are an extra half year in braces! If you don't wear the elastic rubber bands as instructed it will also make your treatment take longer. Frequently rescheduling or missing appointments will slow things down, too.

Eating Instructions

You need to avoid hard and sticky foods. We understand this may be a little inconvenient, but these foods can damage your braces and wires, which will then slow down your treatment. Some foods, such popcorn shells, can get stuck and lead to infections. As good as we are at what we do, we need your help to keep things running along smoothly.

The technique we use to attach your braces is at the cutting edge of modern technology, and is strong. In fact, the technology exists to cement braces to teeth with an even stronger bond, but orthodontists don't do that for a very simple reason – one day we will need to get them off! Another reason we avoid a super-strong bond is that if your brace gets hit by something very hard, such as a hard food or in a sports accident, it is obviously preferable that your brace come loose rather than having your tooth crack. We therefore avoid a super-strong bond for your safety, but the flip side is that braces can come loose from very hard foods and from strong objects such as pens, pencils, and bottle caps.

You will also need to avoid sticky foods as they get caught between the braces and wires, can break wires, and even cause the braces to come loose.

It is difficult to list all of the foods which can damage your braces, so please use your common sense. We have listed below the most common foods that you should avoid while in braces.

Hard Foods to Avoid

The following list gives examples of basic hard foods to avoid eating. Don't suck on them either, as you will forget in middle and unintentionally bite down.

Hard candy of any kind	Peanut brittle	Hard pretzels - thick
Ice cubes	Candy bars with nuts or caramel	Granola bars
Jaw Breakers or suckers	Refrigerated or frozen chocolate	Toffee
Cough drops	Caramel corn	Beef jerky

Some Helpful Tips for Specific Hard Foods

Nuts – avoid hard nuts such as whole almonds or pistachio nuts, especially the shells. You can buy the thin slivers they make for salads, or crush them into small pieces.

Hard taco shells, corn chips, tortilla chips, potato chips – avoid thick, hard chips. Thin chips such as regular potato chips and Pringles are OK, but thicker chips such as Terra Chips or kettle chips should be avoided.

Hard breads and crusts (hard toast, pizza, bagels, etc.) – avoid hard, toasted breads, or over-baked pizza bagels. Soft bagels such as Lender's or Thomas' are OK, but avoid the types from bakeries that have the rubbery outside.

Corn-on-the-cob – cut off the cob before eating.

Wings and ribs – don't bite into the bone. Cut the meat off instead.

Hard fruits and vegetables (apples, carrots, pears, etc.) – don't bite into. Instead, cut into thin *slices*, not wedges.

Popcorn – avoid it as the unpopped kernels can break off braces, and the shells can get trapped in your gums and lead to a painful infection.

Hard Objects to Avoid

Biting or chewing your fingernails. If this is a hard habit to break please let us know. We have something that will help!

Chewing pens, pencils, erasers, bottle caps, bottles, or water bottles

Chewing on clothing or shoestrings

Using your teeth as a tool to break something

Picking at your braces or wires with your fingers

Sticky Foods to Avoid

Gum - any kind	Laffy Taffy	Jelly Belly	Sugar Daddy
Gummy candies	Jolly Ranchers	Tootsie Rolls	Carmel apples
Licorice	Now & Later	Marshmallows	Candy apples
Skittles	Jelly beans	Candy corn	Airheads
Starbursts	Mike and Ike	Caramel candies	Gummy bears

Making Appointments

Appointment reminders: As a courtesy, we typically contact you via email or text to remind you of your appointment. However, please do not rely upon these reminders as it is your responsibility to keep your appointment. If you realize you need to reschedule an appointment, please do not wait until the appointment reminder to inform us.

Making appointments: We understand it is not always possible for a parent to be present at a child's appointment. Sometimes the parent present may not know the patient's schedule well enough to schedule the next appointment. After the appointment, it is the parents' responsibility to contact us in a timely manner to schedule the next appointment. The sooner you contact us, the better selection of appointment times we will have available for you.

Why Do I Need to Keep My Braces and Teeth Clean?

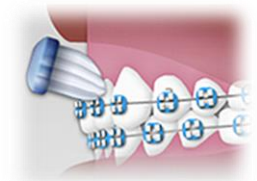
You will notice that it requires a little more effort to keep your teeth clean while you have braces, but it is really important that you do so. Braces by themselves do not cause cavities, but they do make it easier for food and plaque to build up around your teeth. The bacteria in your mouth like to eat this debris, and then they release acid. If the acid sits on your teeth long enough it will start to dissolve your teeth. The earlier stages of this process result in white spots on your teeth that may not go away after your braces come off. The later stages of this process will result in cavities that will require fillings by your dentist. Proper and thorough brushing will prevent these problems and your teeth will look great once your braces are removed.



How Do I Keep My Braces and Teeth Clean?

You can keep your teeth clean with a combination of brushing and flossing. We will give you a brushing kit with items that will help you. When these items wear out they are sold in most drug stores. Please brush after every meal, and rinse your mouth after having sugary drinks. Soda and energy drinks have lots of sugar and acid which can lead to rapid tooth damage. It is especially important to brush thoroughly before going to bed so that the food and bacteria don't stay on your teeth until the morning. We will review hygiene with you at your regular visits and provide you with tips on taking care of your teeth while in orthodontic treatment.

Brushing - Use a soft toothbrush, not hard or medium. With mild pressure brush at a 45-degree angle to the tooth; brush back-and-forth above and below the braces. The goal is a short brushing stroke that covers all of the areas surrounding your braces. Many people make the mistake of simply polishing their braces without ever actually brushing their teeth! Your toothbrush will wear out more rapidly while you have braces, so be sure to replace it when the bristles start to fray. A mechanical or ultrasonic toothbrush are popular options with many of our patients and can be used effectively without damaging your braces and wires.



Proxy Brush – Also called an interproximal brush. We have included this in your home care kit. *This is one of the best ways to keep your teeth clean*, as it fits under the wires where your toothbrush can't reach. Make sure to use this special brush at least before you go to bed.



Flossing - Flossing is the best way to clean the tight spaces between your teeth where cavities are prone to develop. It should be done every day. Many flossing aids have been designed for flossing with braces. We have included in your home care kit an item called floss threaders. Cut off a long piece of floss and insert it into the loop of the floss threader until the floss is even on both sides. The tip of the threader has enough stiffness that you can thread it under your wire between the braces, then remove the threader and then floss normally, using a separate flossing motion around each side. We recommend that when you first try to do this, only do it for 2 or 3 teeth, so that you get comfortable with the technique and build up speed. If you try to do this between every tooth on the first day you may get frustrated.



If you would like to see oral hygiene instructions in video format there are many videos you can watch on YouTube.

Do I Still Need to See My Dentist While I Have Braces?

At your orthodontic visits, Dr. Lundner is primarily concentrating on straightening your teeth. He also pays attention to your oral hygiene, and if he notices a cavity he will inform you. Still, as an orthodontist he is not looking to find them. It is important that you continue your 6 month visits with your dentist so that your dentist can clean and examine your teeth for any signs of cavities or other problems.

Problem Solving – What Should I Do if.....?

Please follow these guidelines for different problems that may arise. On a following page we have pictures to help you identify the parts of your braces. If you are uncertain what to do or have any other questions please call us. We will be able to determine whether an emergency visit to see us is necessary or whether the problem can be solved at home. Please save any broken braces, bands, parts, or appliances and bring them with you. If in doubt, don't throw it out!

Helpful tip: If you have a question and aren't sure how to describe it, take a selfie and email it to us. We will be happy to look! What did you think orthodontists take selfies of? 😊

Helpful tip: We give you orthodontic wax to use if something is poking. If you run out please stop by the office for more, or you can use an equal amount of *sugarless* gum for the same purpose until you see us.

Broken or Loose Braces – If the brace is still on the wire and poking, place wax on it. Please don't play with it with your tongue as it will likely cause further breakage. Sometimes the brace will stay on the wire and move to some degree, other times it will come off the wire. Should it come off the wire please save it in a Ziploc bag and bring it with you to your next appointment to avoid a restocking fee (\$20). Please call the office immediately so we can schedule a repair and keep your treatment running on schedule. **Even if your next appointment is coming up soon, even on the same day, please call us so that we can make sure your appointment has enough time for the repair, and so that we can have everything ready for you when you arrive.**

Rubber band hook fell off the brace – Please call us so that we can schedule a repair. If your next appointment is coming up soon (7-10 days) we can repair it at your next visit.

Ran out of rubber bands or lost them – Please stop by our office to pick up more. Please don't wait until your next appointment. No appointment is necessary, just call to make sure we're open.

Poking wire behind the back brace – If it is bothering you, place wax on the end of the wire, and call the office to schedule a time to have it repaired. If it isn't bothering you or if your next appointment is coming up soon, we can repair it at your next visit.

Wire fell out of the last brace – If you would like to attempt a repair at home, use a pair of tweezers to grab the end of the wire and feed it back through the tube on the back brace. If that is not something you want to try please call us to schedule a repair. If your next appointment is coming up soon, we can repair it at your next visit.

Wire long on one side and short on the other – Handle the same as a wire that fell out of the last brace.

Wire came out of a brace (not the back/last brace) – If you have the braces that have the closing clips (Damon), see if you can push the wire back inside the brace and close the clip by pressing upward on the clip with your finger nail. If you can't get it back in then please call us to schedule a repair. If you have braces with the small color ties or thin wire ties (steel ties) then please call us to schedule a repair.

Part of the wire broke – If your next appointment is coming up soon, we can repair it at your next visit. If it is bothering you place wax on the end of the remaining wire. If your next visit is a few weeks away please call us to schedule a repair.

Color tie or thin wire tie (steel tie) came off the brace – Please call us to schedule a repair. If your next appointment is coming up soon we can repair it at your next visit.

Poking twist from the thin wire tie around a brace, or from the thin metal lace wire connecting a lot of braces – try to tuck it in with tweezers or a thin pencil eraser. If it is still bothering you, place wax on the poking wire and call the office to schedule a time to have it repaired. If it isn't bothering you or if your next appointment is coming up soon, we can repair it at your next visit.

Closing chain snapped, tore, or broke – Please call us to schedule a repair. If your next appointment is coming up soon we can repair it at your next visit.

Coil spring unraveling or small metal shim on the wire fell off – Please call us to schedule a repair. If it is bothering you, place wax on the poking end. If your next appointment is coming up soon and you can get by until then with wax, we can repair it at your next visit.

Something stuck in the braces – If something is caught in your braces, such as stringy food, a thread, or a toothbrush bristle, try to remove it by brushing your teeth, or gently remove it with a pair of tweezers. If that isn't working, or if you are getting to the point where you are starting to pull pretty hard, please call us to schedule for us to remove it for you.

Something stuck in gums – Try to remove it by brushing and flossing your teeth, or gently remove it with a pair of tweezers. If that isn't working please see your dentist.

Gums growing over braces – This is a sign of gingivitis. Brush three times a day, use the proxy brush, and floss at least once a day. If done consistently and with the correct technique, you should notice a drastic improvement within a week. Do NOT be scared to brush when your gums bleed. This is when your teeth and gums need brushing the most. After a few days the swelling and bleeding will decrease.

Swallowed something from braces, wires, or rubber bands – Although it is an unsettling thought, swallowing braces or small wire segments will almost never cause any harm, and will work their way out of your digestive tract. However, if you experience digestive discomfort, call your family physician for how to proceed. If you are experiencing difficulty breathing, proceed to an emergency room immediately.

Gums shrinking and the root of the tooth is becoming visible – This is called recession. It will also be accompanied by painful gums. While it is not a common occurrence, if it happens it needs to be looked at sooner than later. Please call for an appointment. If your next appointment is coming up soon we can look at it at your next visit.

Braces Parts and Terms

Bracket or brace - connects your tooth to the arch wire

Band – on the back teeth we sometimes use a metal ring around the tooth that has a brace

Buccal tube - a regular brace on a molar (back) tooth

Arch wire – the main wire connecting the braces

Hook – a small metal hook that projects from a brace and is used to hook elastics

O-ring – a very small rubber ring or circle that secures the arch wire to the brace. It is often silver, but can be almost any color.

Steel tie – a thin wire twisted around a single brace. It serves the same purpose as an o-ring. Also called a tie wire.

Power chain – an elastic thread that connects a bunch of braces together. It functions to close spaces.

Figure 8 – also called a laced wire, it runs between many braces and links them together. It's similar to a power chain, just that it's a thin wire instead of an elastic thread.

Elastic – also called rubber bands, they are placed by you, running from one tooth to another. They are extremely important for correcting your bite.

