Wearing braces or a plate

This fact sheet is for people who wear orthodontic braces or a plate. It explains getting used to new braces or plates, and the best way to care for your teeth while you are wearing them.

Wearing orthodontic appliances such as braces or a plate can make it more difficult to keep teeth and gums healthy.

The success of your orthodontic treatment will be affected by how well you care for your mouth and also for your braces or plate. While this requires patience and dedication, the end result of a beautiful, healthy smile will be well worth it.

Getting used to new braces or a plate

Here are some common changes you may notice when you are first fitted with new braces or a plate:

- **Appearance**: Your new braces or plate may make you feel self-conscious at first. However, orthodontic treatment is common and you will notice many other people also wearing braces or a plate. Braces can now be made to look almost invisible. However, many young people choose brightly coloured bands or plates and proudly display the colours of their favourite sports team or even their school colours.

- **Speech**: You may experience some difficulties with speech during the first few days. Your new braces or plate will make your mouth feel different. This will be particularly noticeable if your braces or plate sit against the roof of your mouth and affect the movement of your tongue. Once your tongue gets used to the new feeling, speech will return to normal.

  Practice speaking or reading out loud and in front of a mirror to help you get used to your braces or plate.

- **Eating**: Expect to experience some difficulty chewing when your braces or plate are fitted. Here’s some tips to try, particularly for the first few weeks:
  - cut your food into smaller pieces
  - place only a small portion in your mouth at any one time
  - try softer foods
  - chew more slowly than usual
  - avoid foods with a sticky, chewy or hard texture that could break wires or dislodge brackets
  - maintain a balanced diet and limit consumption of sugary and acidic foods and drinks.

- **Tenderness and sore spots**: You may occasionally develop sore spots or tenderness from your braces or plate. This usually only occurs after the initial fitting, or an adjustment. Minor sore spots usually heal in a day or so. Using orthodontic wax and warm, saltwater mouth rinses may help.

  If soreness persists, see your orthodontist. Continue to wear your elastics or plate until your appointment, as leaving them out will prolong treatment and make it harder for the orthodontist to pinpoint the problem area.

How should I care for my teeth during orthodontic treatment?

Good oral hygiene including regular toothbrushing and flossing will help prevent tooth decay while undergoing orthodontic treatment.

If you need treatment for tooth decay during the time you are wearing braces, you may need your braces removed and then re-fitted. This may mean extra appointments, inconvenience, extended treatment time and possibly extra cost.
To ensure good oral hygiene during orthodontic treatment, brush thoroughly after eating using a fluoride toothpaste and a small soft toothbrush. Your orthodontist may recommend a special orthodontic toothbrush or an electric toothbrush.

- **If you have braces**: Remove elastics. Gently brush your teeth and braces, brushing in and around all of the wires and brackets. Clean between teeth daily using dental floss, a special ‘threading floss’ (which has a stiffened end to enable it to be threaded under the orthodontic wire), and/or interdental brushes. Spit out excess toothpaste, but do not rinse. Remember to replace your elastics after cleaning.

- **If you have a plate**: Remove the plate and brush and floss your teeth as usual. Gently brush the gum areas that are covered by your plate and the roof of your mouth. Use your toothbrush and toothpaste to gently clean your plate and rinse it with cool water before putting it back in your mouth.

Occasionally, it may be beneficial to use a disclosing tablet to check you are removing all the plaque. Disclosing tablets dye plaque that has been left behind enabling you to see it clearly. Disclosing tablets can be purchased from supermarkets or pharmacies.

Your orthodontist may recommend additional oral care products such as fluoride gels or mouth rinses.

Continue to visit your dental professional as usual for regular check-ups and treatment.

### What should I do if I damage my braces or plate?

A dental professional should regularly check there has been no damage to your braces or plate.

Braces have wires and brackets that are fragile and may break, loosen or bend if you chew hard foods.

It’s also important not to use your teeth to open bottles or packaging.

If you break or damage your braces or plate, contact your orthodontist immediately. Broken braces or plates will not correct your teeth.

### For more information

- Contact your dental professional
- Call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for confidential health advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Email [oral_health@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:oral_health@health.qld.gov.au)