

**Orthodontic treatment**

**is a team effort**

**between your**

**orthodontist, your**

**dentist and**

**you.**



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**YOUR ROLE  
BETWEEN VISITS**

[aainfo.org](http://aainfo.org)

**CARE**

# DO YOUR PART, KEEP TEETH CLEAN



## WHAT IS MY ROLE?

You are a partner in the process. Keep appointments, maintain good brushing and continue to see your primary dentist every 3-6 months during treatment. Follow all care instructions regarding your appliances and the wearing of removable appliances or rubber bands. In many cases full-time wear of removeables will shorten overall treatment time significantly.

## WHEN TO BRUSH AND FLOSS?

Brush after every meal or snack. If you can't brush, make sure to at least rinse your mouth with water. Floss at least once a day. Make sure your teeth are thoroughly clean before bed.

## HOW TO BRUSH?

Use fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristle toothbrush or electric toothbrush. Begin brushing with water only, so you can see what you're doing. Look for clean and shiny braces, where you can see all the edges of the brackets clearly. Next, add toothpaste. Brush around all the parts of your braces and every surface of your teeth in small circles for at least two minutes. Brush your tongue, roof of the mouth and gums. Rinse thoroughly after brushing with water or a mouth rinse. Finish with inspecting your braces for loose or broken brackets. Change your toothbrush or toothbrush head at the first sign of wear or at least every three months.

## HOW TO FLOSS?

Slide dental floss up and down the sides of each tooth to remove plaque between the teeth. Floss threader, pre-threaded floss and small interproximal brushes are available to help you get under your wires more easily. Ask your orthodontist for any tips on toothbrushing and flossing.

## HYGIENE HELPERS:

- *Interproximal brush* – slip this tool under your archwire to help remove plaque and food particles.
- *Fluoride toothpaste or rinse* – use with your interproximal brush for best results.
- *Electric toothbrush* - brush for a full two minutes.

## RISKS OF POOR ORAL HEALTH?

Plaque and food can accumulate around your braces and lead to permanent white marks (decalcification), cavities, gum disease, periodontitis or advanced periodontitis (where the gums start to pull away, forming gaps or pockets between teeth or teeth begin to fall out).

## FOODS TO AVOID:

Avoid sugary, crunchy, sticky, chewy and hard foods such as caramels, taffy, hard candy, popcorn, pizza crusts, nuts, etc. Eating ice, chewing on pencils or pens and biting into whole apples can cause damage to your appliances. Maintain a healthy diet to provide essential nutrients to bones and tissues undergoing change during treatment. Also, avoid sugary and carbonated beverages that may create white spots around your braces.

*Orthodontists receive an additional two-to-three years of specialized education beyond dental school to learn the proper way to align teeth and correct bites. Only those who successfully complete this formal education may call themselves orthodontists, and only orthodontists can be members of the American Association of Orthodontists. Learn more: [aaoinfo.org](http://aaoinfo.org).*