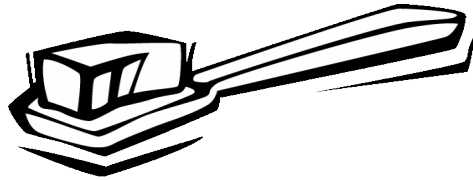


objects like pens, pencils and fingernails. And never chew ice. It's much too hard on the teeth – even without braces. **Also be sure to see your child's dentist for a professional cleaning and check-up at least every six months during the treatment or more often, if recommended. Seeing the orthodontist does not replace the preventive care provided by your child's dental home.**



## Flossing & Brushing Tips with Braces

To floss teeth with braces, feed the short end of the floss through the space between the main arch wire and the upper portion of the tooth closest to the gum. Use a gentle sawing motion to work the floss on each side of the two teeth the floss is between. Be careful not to pull with too much force around the arch wire. Begin brushing teeth by using a regular soft toothbrush. Brush down from the top and then up from the bottom on each tooth with braces. Next, brush the teeth with a proxabrush or "Christmas tree" brush. This brush is specially designed for cleaning between two braces. Insert the brush down from the top and then up from the bottom between two braces. Use several strokes in each direction before moving on to the next space. Repeat the procedure until all teeth have been cleaned. Make sure all food debris is cleaned away from brackets after eating.

## Caring for Retainers

Every time your child brushes his/her teeth, brush the retainer as well. Once a day or at least once a week, disinfect the retainer by soaking it in a denture cleanser, such as Efferdent, Polident, or other brand name solutions. Add the cleanser to a cup full of warm -- but never hot -- water. Thoroughly rinse the retainer with plain water before placing it back in the mouth.

## What to Do If a Bracket or Wire Breaks

Broken braces, loose bands, or protruding wires can cause problems but rarely require emergency treatment. However, do call your orthodontist to set up an office visit to fix the problem. If you suffer a more severe mouth or facial injury, seek immediate help.

## Can my Child Play Sports with braces?

Yes, but make sure they wear a protective mouth guard. Ask your orthodontist to recommend the right kind of mouth guard while they have braces. Keep their smile beautiful after treatment and wear a mouth guard at every practice and every game.

## Can my Child play musical instruments while wearing braces?

With practice and a period of adjustment, braces typically do not interfere with the playing of wind or brass instruments.

**For More Information Contact  
Connecticut Dental Health  
Partnership  
855-CT-DENTAL  
Monday to Friday • 8 AM to 5 PM**

P.O. Box 486  
Farmington, CT 06032

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# Braces and Orthodontic Treatment

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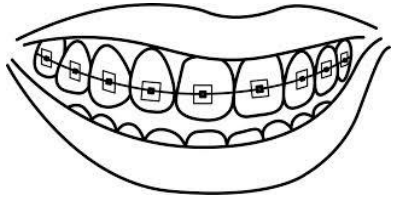
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## About Braces

Braces (orthodontic treatment) are used to correct “bad bites,” or malocclusion (teeth that are crowded or crooked). In some cases teeth may be straight, but the upper and lower jaws may not meet properly. These jaw or tooth alignment problems may be inherited or could result from injury, early or late tooth loss, or thumb sucking.



If your child has an abnormal bite your dentist may recommend braces to straighten out their smile. He/she will refer your child to an orthodontist. An orthodontist is a dentist who specializes in the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of dental and facial irregularities. Correcting the problem can create a nice-looking smile. More importantly, orthodontic treatment results in a healthier mouth.

## How are teeth straightened?

Straightening your child’s teeth can be accomplished in different ways. The kind of orthodontic treatment your child has will depend on their condition and the options provided by your orthodontist. Traditional braces realign teeth by applying pressure. They usually consist of small brackets cemented to the teeth, connected by a wire. The wire is periodically tightened by the orthodontist to gradually shift the teeth. Appliances may also be used to change the upper or lower jaws. Sometimes they are placed behind the teeth.

## Is my Child Covered for Braces? Are There Limitations?

Braces require that an orthodontist examine your child and send a request for approval called a ‘Prior Authorization’. In order for the services to be approved the malocclusion (crowded or crooked-ness) of your child’s teeth must meet a specific level on a scale used by orthodontists.

Services can be covered for children under 21 years of age who have their permanent teeth, have good oral hygiene, have completed any needed restorative treatment and do not have any untreated decay.

**They must maintain good oral hygiene, see their regular dentist (dental home) twice a year for cleanings and be able to tolerate braces. They must keep all scheduled appointments, not break off parts of the braces and cooperate with their orthodontist. Violations may cause the treatment to be ended.**

Braces are a ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ benefit. It is important to complete treatment. You, and in some cases, your child must sign the “Understanding and Undergoing Orthodontic Treatment” form. It outlines you and your child’s responsibilities under the program. It is important to know that if you and/or your child do not meet those responsibilities the treatment may be ended. It can not be resumed at a later date.

**For more specific information contact CTDHP at 855-CT-DENTAL.**

## What Can I Expect at the Orthodontist?

The orthodontist will ask questions about your child’s health. He/she will conduct an exam, take impressions of the teeth, take photos of the face and teeth, and order X-

rays. An appropriate treatment plan is made based on the gathered information. Most children are in treatment from one to three years. This is followed by a period of wearing a retainer that holds teeth in their new positions.

With good care, including braces when medically necessary, teeth can last a lifetime.

## How Often Will my Child Need to See the Orthodontist During Treatment?

The orthodontist will want to see your child about every month or so. He/she will make sure the braces are exerting steady pressure on the teeth. To create more tension and pressure on the teeth, the orthodontist will make adjustments in the wires, springs, or rubber bands of the braces. **It is important to keep all of the appointments. Not doing so can hurt your child’s treatment and may result in the treatment being ended.**

## What Care Can I Expect After the Braces Come Off?

After braces are taken off, your child’s teeth will be thoroughly cleaned. The orthodontist may also fit your child with a retainer. A retainer is a custom-made, removable device that helps teeth maintain their new position after braces have been removed. The use of a retainer is a very important part of post-braces care. Retainers are typically made of rubber or clear plastic and metal wires that cover the outside surface of the teeth. It needs to be worn all the time for the first six months and then usually only during sleep. The time frame for wearing a

retainer will vary from patient to patient. The reason why a retainer is needed is that even though braces may have successfully straightened the teeth, they are not completely settled in their new position. The bones, gums, and muscles need to adapt to the change. Also, after long periods of time, teeth tend to shift. Your orthodontist will instruct you and your child on how and when to wear the retainer.

## How do I Take Care of my Child’s Braces?

Braces are a partnership of the doctor and the patient. The orthodontist provides custom-made fixed or removable appliances. They use gentle pressure to move teeth into their proper positions. For the patient, **treatment always requires following the orthodontist’s instructions, keeping scheduled orthodontic appointments and maintaining excellent oral hygiene to achieve the best results.**

Braces, wires, springs, rubber bands, and other appliances can attract food and plaque. They can stain teeth if not brushed away. Orthodontists recommend brushing after every meal or snack with fluoride toothpaste and carefully removing any food that may have gotten stuck in the braces. Some orthodontists will also prescribe or recommend a fluoride mouthwash. It can get into places in the mouth that a toothbrush can’t reach. Keeping your child’s teeth and braces clean requires a little more effort on your part.

In general, patients with braces must be careful to avoid hard, sticky, chewy and crunchy foods, particularly chewing gum. They should also avoid chewing on hard