

# Tips For Teeth With Braces: Creating A Healthy, Beautiful Smile

(NAPSA)—All that glitters is *not* gold. For more than five million people in the United States and Canada, what glitters may be their braces.

More people than ever are being treated by orthodontists who are members of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO). Patients wearing braces need to pay special attention to keeping braces, teeth and gums clean during orthodontic treatment.

“By following their orthodontist’s guidance on dental hygiene and avoiding certain foods while wearing braces, patients will be on track to a lifetime of healthy teeth and a beautiful smile,” says Dr. James J. Caveney, president of the AAO.

Plaque is the reason that patients need to be vigilant about dental hygiene during orthodontic treatment. If plaque is left on teeth and around braces, patients may develop swollen gums, bad breath, scarred and discolored teeth, and even cavities. When plaque is removed regularly during treatment, patients are rewarded with the best possible results in the shortest time possible.

To help patients in their fight against plaque, orthodontists recommend the following tools:

- Toothbrushes (manual, travel and power varieties);
- Fluoride toothpaste;
- Dental floss;
- Interproximal brush—tiny, cone-shaped brush that is designed to slip under the archwire and remove plaque



**Attention to oral hygiene is especially important for people with braces, for strong, healthy teeth.**

and food particles in hard-to-reach spots around brackets and between teeth; and

- Fluoride rinse.

Once a patient has the proper tools, they can fight plaque by following these guidelines. To begin, patients should clean their teeth at least four times a day (after each meal and before bed) with a soft, rounded-bristle manual or power toothbrush in good condition and a fluoride toothpaste. And their orthodontist’s instructions on how to properly brush with braces should be followed.

“A travel toothbrush is a great way to make brushing more convenient when away from home,” says Dr. Caveney. “But if no toothbrush is available after a meal out, at least rinse the mouth thoroughly to clear most large food particles.”

Brushing alone, however, will not remove all of the plaque. Floss

should be used at least once every day between teeth, around brackets and at the gumline. Reusable floss threaders help patients maneuver dental floss between archwires and teeth. Pre-cut floss with ready-made threader tips can be helpful as well.

Patients also need professional cleanings at the dentist’s office at least every six months to keep teeth and gums in top condition during orthodontic treatment. Even with diligent attention to daily dental hygiene, professional cleanings are key in removing plaque build-up.

And while patients are working at keeping braces, teeth and gums clean, they should try to avoid some potential braces-busting foods. Those foods include anything that is hard, sticky, crunchy or chewy—like taco chips, caramels, hard pretzels, taffy, unpopped popcorn kernels, peanuts—even sugarless bubblegum.

Softer foods and a good diet are important to successful orthodontic treatment. A balanced diet provides nutrients that are essential to bones and tissues undergoing change during treatment. And fresh vegetables such as carrots and celery are ok to eat, provided they are cut up in small pieces rather than bitten.

Orthodontic patients who follow these tips will be rewarded with a healthy, beautiful smile. Information on orthodontics can be found on the AAO’s Web site located at [www.braces.org](http://www.braces.org), or by calling 1-800-STRAIGHT.