



*Congratulations on getting your braces! Taking care of your teeth and appliances are very important for the success of treatment and the health of your teeth. I hope you'll find this Braces Manual useful. If you have any questions, please reach out to our team. I personally look forward to taking care of you. - Dr. Winnie Cung*

### **Your First Day**

The adhesive used by Dr. Winnie to attach the orthodontic appliances cures rapidly, but takes 24 hours to completely cure. You may eat any time after leaving our office; however, we ask that you read the section on eating before your first meal.

### **General Soreness**

Whether your braces are on the inside or outside, initially they feel like they “stick out.” This is normal. As you become accustomed to your braces, this sensation will go away. Although the appliances we use have been rounded and smoothed, you may find it helpful to rinse with warm salt water every four hours for the first few days for comfort.

Most patients have some soreness beginning during the first eight hours and dissipating in 2-7 days. Non-prescription pain remedies may be used at your discretion for discomfort. They should be taken as soon as possible after your appliances have been placed.

### **Before Leaving the Office**

There are routine steps that we ask you to take prior to leaving the office after each office visit:

1. Using your finger and tongue, check that wires or brackets are not poking in any way.
2. Make sure you understand what you are to do until your next visit. This could include wearing
3. elastics, activating expanders or following specific hygiene or diet instructions.
4. Always schedule your next appointment before leaving the office. Waiting for 2 weeks after an appointment to schedule your office visit complicates the scheduling process. Postponing appointments is a common contributor to extended treatment.
5. Make sure that all of your questions about treatment are answered. Treatment goes better when everyone understands the treatment process.

### **Eating and Potential Harm to your Orthodontic Appliances**

Two types of food tend to cause harm to your braces: hard foods and sticky foods.

Foods that cannot be cleaned off the braces may lead to discoloration and gum inflammation. Appliances and wires can be dislodged, bent or broken as well. Even though appliances are strong and attached firmly, eating the wrong foods will damage your appliances causing delays and extra office visits.

Chewing ice, pencils, pen caps and fingernails can also be very destructive to your appliances. Some foods such as whole apples, raw carrots or celery are healthy snacks, but must be cut into small pieces to avoid damaging your braces.

If you love popcorn, please be careful. Popcorn can also cause harm to your braces in multiple ways. The husks from the popcorn can become lodged beneath the braces and cause irritation to the gum tissue. Unpopped kernels can shear or break off brackets as well as bend and dislodge wires.

With care, most foods can be eaten with care. Remember if you have questions about dietary restrictions or good food choices; please ask any of our team at Winnie Orthodontics.

## **Repairs and Emergencies**

Dental emergencies while wearing braces or other orthodontic appliances fall into two categories:

### **1. DIRECT INJURIES TO THE MOUTH OR TEETH**

Following a direct injury to your mouth or teeth, whether undergoing orthodontic care or not, you should be seen by your regular dentist as soon as possible. Usually a radiograph of the involved tooth, or teeth, is needed to ascertain the extent of injury. If a tooth has been knocked out, severely displaced or fractured, it is best to contact your family dentist first, since we may not have the necessary materials needed to treat these injuries. If the orthodontic appliances are dislodged or displaced, we will need to replace or adjust them as soon as possible. Please call our office immediately after seeing your family dentist. If you are unable to reach your family dentist or an alternate emergency facility, call this office and we will assist you in locating someone to care for the injury. Please discuss potential emergency procedures with your family dentist at your next visit to their office.

### **2. EMERGENCIES RELATED TO ORTHODONTIC APPLIANCES**

Broken or disturbed appliances are likely to occur from time to time during your orthodontic care. If there is any disturbance such as loose bands, broken or poking wires, call our office as soon as possible so we can evaluate the urgency of the problem and schedule you to be seen accordingly. If you need assistance outside business hours, please call our office and our answering machine will give you instructions on what to do and whom to call.

IN THE INTERIM, THE FOLLOWING ARE HELPFUL HINTS TO REMEDY SOME OF THE PROBLEMS YOU MAY ENCOUNTER UNTIL YOU CAN BE SEEN IN OUR OFFICE:

- If a wire is irritating your mouth, cover it with orthodontic wax. The wax can be purchased at any pharmacy. If they do not have orthodontic wax, it is the same wax that is sold for ear plugs.
- A loose band or bracket can generally be left in place until seen in our office. Orthodontic wax can also be used to help hold the band or bracket in place temporarily. Call the office as soon as you notice a loose band or bracket so we can adjust your appointment.
- A broken arch wire, or one that is irritating the gum or cheek tissue, needs to be seen as soon as possible for replacement or adjustment.
- A removable appliance that is not fitting well is not to be worn until it can be properly adjusted in our office.

## **Oral Hygiene and Diet as it Relates to Decay, Decalcification and Gingivitis**

Food left on the teeth and gum line after eating feeds bacteria which cause plaque to form. Plaque causes cavities (tooth decay), decalcification (white marks on teeth) and gingivitis or gum disease (swollen, puffy, red, overgrown or bleeding gums). Since the braces act like a shelf, sugary drinks and foods are especially bad for teeth and gums. Clean teeth do not decay and healthy gums do not bleed.

To maintain healthy teeth while wearing braces and to reduce the possibility of decay, decalcification and inflammation of the gums, please follow these recommendations:

1. The best preventive measure is excellent oral hygiene. This includes brushing with fluoride toothpaste for at least two (2) minutes after breakfast and before going to bed. A regular soft bristled tooth brush will do well, but we highly recommend an electric toothbrush. After brushing, look at your braces closely in the mirror to make sure all food debris and plaque have been totally removed. The braces should look like they've been just shined with silver polish. If you cannot see the back braces clearly, have someone check them for you.
2. Fluoride is a very important part of the prevention program. Fluoride will attach to any weakened enamel and strengthen it. Based on recent research, we are recommending that after brushing with fluoride toothpaste and rinsing, before going to bed, rinse with a fluoride mouthwash. Hold for 60 seconds then spit, but do not rinse. The idea is to LEAVE A SMALL AMOUNT OF FLUORIDE ON YOUR TEETH ALL NIGHT. This nightly light fluoride treatment will definitely help prevent decay, decalcification and gingivitis.
3. Minimize eating foods with high fructose corn syrup, sucrose and other sugars. All candy is in this category as well as many juices. The bacteria that cause decay, decalcification and gingivitis utilize the fermentable carbohydrates as their food. The more sugar, the higher the bacterial count and the more likely problems will occur.
4. Minimize or avoid drinking soft drinks. There is evidence that the acid from carbonated soft drinks not only dissolves the orthodontic band cement but it also contributes to the breakdown of enamel if multiple soft drinks are ingested each day.
5. It is very important to continue with regular professional cleaning with your general dentist. You should see your dentist at 6 month intervals for recall visits unless they would like to see you more frequently. This will depend on your own skill and your existing periodontal condition. Your dentist will also check you for decay or other problems that may arise during treatment. If you need a referral for a general dentist, please ask us and we will assist you in finding someone for you.

The rewards of braces – straight teeth, a beautiful smile and a healthy mouth, are achievable goals for all of our patients. We need your help to make sure the teeth and the gums are also healthy at the completion of treatment. By following the instructions provided in this handout, you will have the best chance of having a truly outstanding result.

***We can't do it without you!***