

Orthodontic Department

Your Visit to the Dental Hygienist

This leaflet has been written for patients who have been referred to see our Dental Hygienist.

What is a Dental Hygienist?

- A Dental Hygienist will **help you clean your teeth and gums** to try to keep your mouth healthy
- This is really important whilst you are wearing braces.

Why do I need to visit the Dental Hygienist?

- Your orthodontist may feel that you need **advice** and **help** with cleaning
- Some people have a **build-up of tartar (calculus)** on their teeth. This is a hard build-up of plaque which is difficult to remove. The Dental Hygienist **can remove** this for you.

Why is it important that I see the Dental Hygienist?

- **Poor cleaning** can lead to:
 - Bad breath
 - Stained teeth
 - **Tooth decay**
 - Gum disease
 - **Losing teeth**
- **Braces** make it **more difficult to clean**, therefore you are at **more risk** of having these **problems** during brace treatment
- **If you do not clean** well, and the **risk of your teeth** becoming **damaged** is too **great**, your orthodontist may have to **take off your brace** even if your teeth are not fully straight.

What will the Dental Hygienist do?

- Our Dental Hygienist will thoroughly clean your teeth (**a scale and polish**)
 - This will **remove plaque** and **hard deposits** of tartar that build up on teeth
 - This usually takes around **10-15 minutes**
- More **importantly** she will **teach you** how to **stop plaque** and **tartar coming back**
- She will **show** you:
 - Good tooth **brushing technique**
 - How to clean the **areas** you are **missing**
 - **How to clean around** your **brace**
 - **How to clean between** your **teeth**

- She can **advise** you on:
 - The **best toothbrush** for you
 - **Extra brushes** or **dental tape** to help clean difficult to reach areas
 - The **best toothpaste** for you
 - The **best mouthwash** for you
- She may give you **advice** about your **diet** eg reducing how often you have sugary or acidic foods and drinks
- Some people need protection of **fluoride varnish**. She will apply this if needed.

What other help can be given to adults?

Gum Disease

- **Adults** before having braces, may have had **gum disease**
- Our hygienist will help make sure that your **gum disease is controlled**
- As well as help with cleaning, she can also **use anti-bacterial gels** and **solutions** applied under the gum to kill the bacteria causing gum disease.

Smoking

- If you smoke, she **will discuss**:
 - **The impact** of this on your **oral health**
 - How to increase your chances of success in **stopping smoking**
- As well as **staining** of the teeth, smokers have **more gum disease** and **lose** more **teeth** than non-smokers.

How can I keep my mouth healthy?

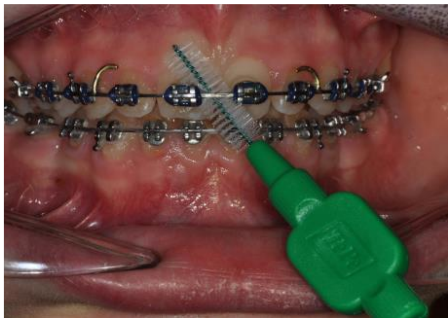
- Brace wearers should **clean their teeth every time they eat**
 - Brushing around **fixed braces** can take **four minutes or longer**. Make sure you leave yourself with enough time to do a good job
- If you do not have a brace, you should **clean at least twice a day**
 - Brush for at **least 3 minutes**
- Use a **toothpaste containing fluoride**
- Do **not rinse** your mouth **after brushing**; just **spit out excess toothpaste**
- Use **dental tape** or **special brushes** to **clean between your teeth**
- Use a **fluoride mouthwash daily** (at a different time of day to brushing)
- **Cut down** on the snacks you have between meals
- **Limit sugary treats** to meal times
- **Avoid sugary** and **acidic drinks**. If you have one as a treat, use a straw
- **Avoid chewy** and **hard sweets**
- Do **not add sugar** to tea and coffee
- Apps like 'Sugar Smart' can help you to identify foods containing high levels of sugar.

Tips and hints on cleaning

- Use a **re-chargeable electric** (not battery powered) **toothbrush**, with a small round head
- Alternatively, use a **small headed, adult size, good quality toothbrush** with medium bristles
- Try to **brush in the same order every time** - outside, inside and biting surfaces, then use special brushes to clean around the braces and under the wire (see below)
- Do not scrub at your gums, but make sure you do clean under your gums and not just your teeth
- **Brush your tongue** to remove bacteria and keep breath fresh.



Disclosing tablets contain a **dye**, which sticks to dental plaque and shows the areas you need to clean.



Interdental brushes such as TePe® brushes can help to clean under the wire (size green or blue).



Interdental brushes can also be used to clean between the teeth (size pink or orange).



An interspace brush will help you clean around the brace.

Contact Numbers:

We hope you have found this information useful, but if you have any questions or are worried about anything, please speak to the Orthodontic team:

Orthodontic Department (Dorset County Hospital): 01305 2551747

Orthodontic Department (University Hospitals Dorset): 0300 019 4694

About this leaflet:

Author: Pamela Ellis, Consultant Orthodontist
Written: March 2021
Approved: April 2021
Review Date: March 2025
Edition: v2

If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email patientinformation.leaflets@dchft.nhs.uk



INTEGRITY | RESPECT | TEAMWORK | EXCELLENCE

© 2025 Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Williams Avenue, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 2JY
www.dchft.nhs.uk