

PATIENT GUIDE

Brushing with braces

The three-minute routine that keeps teeth and gums healthy under braces, and what a clean bracket looks like.

30 Aug 2026

Braces give plaque a lot of places to hide, and plaque left around a bracket for a few weeks leaves a white mark on the enamel that does not fade. Brushing after every meal, small circles around every bracket and along the gums, keeps the teeth under the braces as healthy as the day they went on. It takes three minutes and it matters more than any other habit in treatment.

3x a day

After breakfast, after lunch or school, and last thing at night. The night one is the one that counts most.

3 minutes

A bracket has four sides and a gum line beneath it. Two minutes is not enough; time it for the first week.

1 interdental brush a day

For under the wire and between the teeth, where a toothbrush cannot reach.

The routine

1. Rinse first

Swish water hard to loosen food from around the brackets.

2. Above the brackets

Angle the bristles down into the gap between the gum and the bracket. Small circles, tooth by tooth, along the whole top row. Then the same for the bottom, angling up.

3. Below the brackets

Angle the other way, into the gap between the bracket and the biting edge. Same small circles.

4. On top of the brackets

Straight on, scrubbing the bracket faces and the wire.

5. Everything else

The insides of the teeth, the chewing surfaces and the tongue, as you always did.

6. Between the teeth

An interdental brush under the wire and between each pair of teeth, once a day. The between-teeth guide shows how.

What clean looks like

Look in the mirror after brushing. Enamel around the bracket should be shiny, with no dull white film and no yellow along the gum. Gums should be pink and flat, not puffy or red, and should not bleed when you brush. Bleeding gums are inflamed gums, and the fix is more brushing, not less: a week of thorough cleaning settles them.

Good to know

- An electric toothbrush is fine and often easier. Use a small head and let it do the circles.
- A fluoride toothpaste, every time. Spit, do not rinse, at night, so the fluoride stays on the teeth.
- Brush heads wear out faster on braces. Replace every couple of months.
- Keep a travel brush in your school or work bag for the lunchtime brush.

Clean teeth move well and finish well.