

PATIENT GUIDE

Cleaning between your teeth with braces

Interdental brushes, floss threaders and water flossers: which to use where, and how to make it a one-minute habit. · 31 Aug 2026

A toothbrush cleans the faces of the teeth. The wire, the gaps under it and the spaces between the teeth need something narrower. Interdental brushes do most of that job in a minute a day; floss with a threader or a water flosser finishes it. Once a day, at night, is the habit.

Interdental brushes

A small bristled brush on a wire handle, sized to fit the gap. Slide it under the archwire beside each bracket and move it up and down a few times, then between each pair of teeth from the front. If it does not go in without pushing, use the next size down; if it goes in loosely, size up. We will show you the sizes that fit your teeth.

Floss

Ordinary floss cannot pass the wire, so use a floss threader (a plastic loop that pulls the floss under the wire) or a superfloss with a stiff end. Pass it under the wire, floss the gap down to the gum on both sides, pull it out, and move to the next gap. It takes longer than it did before braces; a water flosser is the shortcut most people settle on.

Water flossers

A jet of water along the gum line and around each bracket. It is not a replacement for brushing, but it clears what the brush leaves under the wire and along the gum in under a minute, and it is the easiest between-teeth option with braces on. Lean over the basin, mouth slightly open, and trace the gum line top and bottom.

Making it stick

- Do it at the same time as the night brush, before the toothpaste, so it is one routine rather than two.
- Keep the brushes in a cup by the basin where you can see them.
- Bleeding for the first week is normal; it stops once the gums are clean.