

PATIENT GUIDE

Sugar, snacking and drinks during treatment

Why how often you have sugar matters more than how much, and the simple swaps that protect enamel under braces and aligners. · 30 Aug 2026

Every time sugar passes your teeth, plaque makes acid for about twenty minutes. Around a bracket, or under an aligner, that acid sits against the enamel rather than being washed away. How often sugar goes past matters more than how much, which is why a drink sipped over an hour does more damage than a dessert eaten in five minutes.

Drinks

Fizzy drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavoured waters and juice are the main cause of white marks and decay during treatment, because they are sugary or acidic and because they are sipped. Water and plain milk are the everyday drinks. If you do have something sweet, have it with a meal, drink it in one go, and rinse with water afterwards. With aligners in, water is the only drink.

Snacks

KINDER TO TEETH · HARDER ON TEETH

Cheese, plain yoghurt, nuts (crushed if you have braces), boiled eggs

Lollies, chewy sweets, dried fruit

Fruit cut up, vegetable sticks, hummus

Biscuits, muesli bars, cake

Wholegrain crackers, cold meats

Chips and crisps that pack around brackets

Plain popcorn is off the menu with braces; rice crackers are a fair swap

Anything sticky enough to need pulling off the teeth

The habits that protect enamel

- Sugar at meal times, not between them. Three or four sugar hits a day is fine; ten is not.
- Rinse with water after anything sweet when you cannot brush.
- Fluoride toothpaste at night, spat not rinsed.
- Chewing sugar-free gum after meals helps with aligners out; with braces on, it is off the menu.

It is the sipping and the grazing, not the treat.