

PATIENT GUIDE

Eating with braces: the one rule

Hard, sticky or chewy breaks brackets. Everything else is on the menu. · 31 Aug 2026

Most food is fine with braces. The exception is anything hard, sticky or chewy, because those are the things that pop brackets off and bend wires. A broken bracket does no work until it is fixed, so every one costs time. The rule is short and it covers everything.

The one rule

If it is hard, sticky or chewy, it is a bracket breaker. That is the whole rule. Hard things snap brackets off with force; sticky things pull them off slowly; chewy things bend wires out of shape so they stop steering the teeth.

WATCH OUT FOR · INSTEAD

Hard: nuts, popcorn, ice, hard lollies, crusty bread, corn on the cob, whole apples and carrots

Cut fruit and vegetables into small pieces. Strip corn off the cob. Choose softer bread.

Sticky: toffee, chewing gum, caramel, muesli bars, jelly lollies

Chocolate that melts is fine. Anything you have to pull off your teeth is not.

Chewy: bagels, pizza crust, tough meat, jerky

Tear rather than bite. Cut meat small. Eat the pizza, leave the crust.

Biting with the front teeth: sandwiches, burgers, apples

Cut into pieces and use the back teeth. The front brackets are the ones that break most.

Drinks and sugar

Fizzy drinks, sports drinks and juice sit around brackets and are the most common cause of the white marks some people are left with after braces. Water and milk are the everyday drinks. If you do have something sweet, have it with a meal, not sipped over an hour, and rinse with water afterwards.

Good to know

- Everything is softer in the first few days. Go back to normal food as the tenderness fades.
- Never chew pens, pencils, fingernails or ice. Those break more brackets than food does.
- Something feels wrong after eating? Look in the mirror. A bracket that wobbles or slides on the wire needs a message to us.

Cut it up, chew at the back, and the braces stay on.