

PATIENT GUIDE

Gums, plaque and white marks: what to watch for

The two things that can leave a mark after braces, how to spot them early, and how to stop them. · 31 Aug 2026

Two things can spoil a result that the braces themselves got right: white marks on the enamel where plaque sat too long (decalcification), and puffy, overgrown gums from the same cause. Both are visible early, both stop the moment cleaning improves, and both are avoidable with the brushing routine and a sensible diet.

White marks

Plaque around a bracket makes acid every time sugar passes it. Acid pulls minerals out of the enamel, and the enamel turns chalky white at that spot. Early on, the mark is a slight dullness beside the bracket that disappears with a week of thorough brushing and fluoride. Left for months, it becomes a permanent chalk-white square that shows when the bracket comes off.

Look at your teeth in good light after brushing. Dull or chalky patches next to a bracket, especially near the gum, mean plaque has been sitting there. Brush that area with extra care, cut back on sugary drinks, and mention it at your next visit.

Gums

Gums inflamed by plaque swell, look red and bleed on brushing. With braces they can grow up over the brackets, which traps more plaque and makes cleaning harder still. The fix is the same as for the white marks: a week of really thorough brushing settles most swollen gums, and a professional clean does the rest. Inflamed gums also slow tooth movement, so this affects treatment time as well as the finish.

What helps most

- Brushing after every meal, three minutes, around every bracket. The routine in the brushing guide.
- Fluoride toothpaste, spat not rinsed, last thing at night.
- Water and milk as the everyday drinks. Sugary and fizzy drinks are the main cause of white marks with braces.
- Dentist or hygienist cleans every six months during treatment. Tell them you are in braces.

Message us if

- You have noticed chalky patches that are not clearing with brushing.
- Gums are growing over the brackets or bleeding heavily.
- You would like us to go over the routine again in the chair. We are happy to.

Call us on (09)520 1880 or email hello@milkorthodontics.co.nz.