

## LEARNING HUB

## LET'S GET IT STRAIGHT: DOES MY CHILD NEED TO SEE A DENTIST WHEN THEY HAVE BRACES?

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With after-school sport, piano lessons and now orthodontist appointments – your family calendar must be filling up fast! But because you're getting specialist care for your child with braces, does that mean you can forgo their regular dental check-ups too? Absolutely not.

Here's why it's more important than ever to keep up those regular visits to the dentist.

### But let's start with the all-important orthodontist

There's no doubt orthodontists and dentists are cut from the same string of floss. But when it comes to your brace-clad kid, their roles are different – but equally important.

Orthodontists specialise in gently moving teeth and jaws so they bite together beautifully. The result? Lovely smiles.

And not surprisingly, they regularly prescribe and fit braces to young adult teeth. In these cases, children need to see their orthodontist every 6-8 weeks or so to keep their braces tight and secure.

Missing an appointment can lead to breakages and complications. And that means wearing braces for longer!

### So where does the regular dentist come in?

Did you know that braces act as a magnet for plaque and tartar – increasing the risk of tooth decay and gum disease? AKA, bad news for teeth!

Because your orthodontist is focusing their energy on all things braces, it's up to your general dentist to look after your child's overall oral health.

Trained to diagnose and treat conditions of teeth, gums, tongue, and mouth, your dentist will watch out for some of the following common risks that can arise among children with braces:

- **Demineralisation:** Also known as 'white scars', demineralisation is an early sign of tooth decay – so it's important to keep an eye out for this.
- **Tooth decay:** It's a lot harder for kids to clean all the nooks and crannies between their teeth with braces in the way. And this can cause tooth decay over time if not addressed.
- **Gingivitis:** Having braces can cause your kid to miss their gum line when brushing. They may experience gum tenderness and swelling – but don't worry your dentist will be on the case.

While these conditions might sound alarming, there's no need to fret. If your dentist detects them early, they can be easily resolved. More reason for those regular check-ups!

### But, as always – prevention is better than cure

With increased risk of plaque build-up and decay during their braces years, it's more important than ever that your child keeps their chompers clean.

That's why we recommend a professional clean and fluoride treatment **every 6 months** – or **every 3 months** for kids with high-risk tooth conditions, who need a bit of extra care.

To effectively clean teeth with braces, dental hygienists use special equipment – making sure bits of food and build-up stuck in the wires don't stand a chance.

### And knowledge is the key to a perfect smile

There's no question that kids with braces have to be more responsible when caring for their teeth to avoid the risks of prolonged treatment, cavities and staining.

Yet, it's safe to say that for many kids, flossing and brushing properly doesn't come high on their priority list.

So, if you're constantly nagging them to give their braces the time and care they need to no avail, that's another good reason to bring them to their dentist regularly.

We can remind them what they can and can't eat – and show them how to brush properly with their braces. (SPOILER ALERT: They should be brushing after every meal and just before bed, which is **at least** 3 times a day!)

And of course, we'll also help them understand the importance of daily flossing to remove the food and bacteria the toothbrush can't reach.

**We get it, your time is spread thin – braces and all. But, in addition to your orthodontist, be sure to see the dentist every 6 months. Once those braces come off, we want your child's teeth to be sparkly clean and *healthy*. So why not get those appointments locked into your calendar now? Call us on 02 8814 7946 – or [book online](#).**

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