

Oral Hygiene Concerns

With the fast pace we live today, the one area of our health that is sometimes neglected is our oral hygiene (brushing and flossing of teeth). There are four major concerns of oral hygiene as pertains to orthodontic treatment.

- non fluoridated water supply, or lack of topical fluoride to make tooth enamel more acid resistant
- greater consumption of sugar drinks such as energy drinks(Red Bull/Gatorade). Some energy drinks have a higher percentage of caffeine, a stimulant that reduces saliva flow thereby reducing the natural buffering agents in the saliva and further increasing the risk of tooth decay+6 from the substantial amount of dissolved sugar in the drink. The amount of caffeine may also promote greater regular consumption due to its quick and substantial physiological/psychological effect, thereby repeating the decay promoting cycle.
- additional sources of sugar are the obvious; candies, gum, sweets, as well as starchy snacks, such as chips, crackers, and white bread(our saliva breaks the starch down into simple sugar). Between meals is the time that these foods have the greatest impact. This is when the saliva with its natural buffering agents (decay reducing) is at it's lowest. Snacks should be consumed if at all closer to mealtime.
- a greater incidence of decay or cavities including white marks on the front of the teeth at the completion of orthodontic treatment, which is a result of plaque not regularly removed from the teeth

Good science has found that **complete removal of all of the plaque once a day** will prevent any decay from occurring. Though we recommend frequent daily brushing with braces present, this is not always possible. An extra effort in the evening when brushing, flossing and careful inspection will do wonders toward the prevention of decay.

The cement that is used to adhere the brackets to the teeth has a fluoride-releasing agent to toughen-up the enamel in the immediate area where the bracket is placed on the tooth. Proper tooth brushing is the major component in reducing long-term damage to the teeth. This damage such as white marks that are whiter than the teeth themselves are permanent. The only way these white marks can be covered-up is through veneering or surface filling material after treatment. This procedure would be arranged through your family dentist and may be costly.

These white marks or 'brace tattoos' are fully preventable through proper tooth brushing. All of our patients are thoroughly instructed in proper oral hygiene and are given all the tools necessary to maintain optimum oral health. Throughout treatment if excessive plaque is a concern, then tooth brushing is reviewed and reinforced at the patient's appointments. In the event that decalcification (white) marks begin to appear on the teeth, the treatment is then accelerated to prevent further damage. The original goals or objectives of the treatment may not be met as a result.