

Orthodontic Department  
**Patient Information**

Health & care  
information  
you can trust

The Information Standard  Certified Member

# Information

If you need this information in large print, easy read, on audiotape or in another language please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail [pals@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@dchft.nhs.uk)

If you wish to obtain a list of the sources used to develop this information leaflet please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail [patient.info@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.info@dchft.nhs.uk)

Author: Dr. P. Ellis  
Role: Consultant Orthodontist  
Publication Date: 06/16  
Reviewed June 19

## Your visit to the Dental Hygienist



### What is a Dental Hygienist?

A Dental Hygienist gives you help in cleaning your teeth and gums to help keep your mouth healthy. This is really important whilst you are wearing braces.

### Why do I need to visit the Dental Hygienist?

Your orthodontist may feel that you need help with cleaning. Also, some people have a build-up of tartar (also called calculus) on their teeth; this hard build up is difficult to remove. The Dental Hygienist can remove this for you.

## **Why is it important that I see the Dental Hygienist?**

Poor cleaning can lead to:

- Bad breath
- Stained teeth
- Tooth decay
- Gum disease
- Losing teeth

Because braces make it more difficult to clean, you are at more risk of having these problems during brace treatment. If you don't clean well, your orthodontist may decide that the risk of your teeth becoming damaged is too great and they may have to remove your brace before your teeth are fully straightened.

## **What will the Dental Hygienist do?**

Our Dental Hygienist will thoroughly clean your teeth (a scale and polish). This will remove plaque and hard deposits of tartar that build up on teeth. This usually takes around 10-15 minutes.

More importantly she will teach you how to stop plaque and tartar coming back. She will show you: good tooth brushing technique; how to clean the areas you are missing; how to clean around your brace; and how to clean between your teeth.

She can advise you on: the best toothbrush for you; extra brushes or dental tape to help clean difficult to reach areas; the best toothpaste for you to use; the best mouthwash for you.

She may also give you advice about your diet – in particular reducing how often you have sugary or acidic foods and drinks.

Some people need extra protection from a fluoride varnish and she will apply this if needed.

## **What other help can be given to adults?**

Adults having braces may have had gum disease. Our hygienist will make sure that your gum disease is controlled. As well as help with cleaning, she can also use anti-bacterial gels and solutions applied under the gum to kill the bacteria causing gum disease.

If you smoke, she will discuss the impact of this on your oral health and how to increase your chances of success in stopping. As well as staining of the teeth, smokers have more gum disease and lose more teeth than non-smokers.

## **How can I keep my mouth healthy?**

- Brace wearers should clean their teeth every time they eat, if you don't have a brace yet, you should clean at least twice a day
- Brushing around fixed braces can take 4 minutes or longer – make sure you leave yourself with enough time to do a good job
- Use a toothpaste containing fluoride
- Do not rinse your mouth after brushing – just spit out excess toothpaste
- Use dental tape or special brushes to clean between your teeth.
- Use a fluoride mouthwash daily (at a different time of day to brushing)
- Cut down on the snacks you have between meals
- Limit sugary treats to meal times
- Avoid sugary and acidic drinks. If you have one as a treat - use a straw
- Avoid chewy and hard sweets
- Do not add sugar to tea and coffee
- Apps like 'Sugar Smart' can help you to identify foods containing high levels of sugar

## Tips and hints on cleaning:

- Use a re-chargeable electric (not battery powered) toothbrush with a small round head
- Alternatively, use a small headed, adult size good quality toothbrush with medium bristles
- Try to brush in the same order every time - outside, inside and biting surfaces then use special brushes to clean around the braces and under the wire (see below)
- Don't scrub at your gums but make sure you do clean under your gums and not just your teeth
- Brush your tongue to remove bacteria and keep breath fresh



Disclosing tablets will help you see the areas you are missing when brushing

TePe brushes can help to clean under the wire (size green or yellow)



TePe brushes can also be used to clean between the teeth (size pink or orange)

An interspace brush will help you clean around the brace

