**Martin W. Stratemann, DDS, MS**

**Scott A. Stratemann, DDS, MS**

# PRACTICE LIMITED TO ORTHODONTICS

# 550 COMAL AVENUE NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS 78130-7688 (830) 625-4617

**Home Care Instructions**

Maintaining excellent oral hygiene is critical to successful orthodontic treatment. Inadequate oral hygiene during treatment can lead to permanent stain marks, or decalcifications, and even cavities on the teeth. Without proper oral hygiene, the gums may become swollen, bleed easily, and even overgrow.

Tooth Brushing Technique

Patients with orthodontic appliances should brush a minimum of 2 times daily, in the mornings and before bed. It is more ideal to brush after every meal and snack to keep the tooth surfaces clean. Proper tooth brushing with orthodontic appliances is focused on removing all plaque and food debris from around the braces.

Focus on the front of the teeth first. Move the head of the tooth brush in a circular motion around one or two teeth at a time, focusing on moving the bristles around all sides of each bracket. Spend extra time around the gum line areas, which are commonly neglected. To reach the gum line, you may need to roll the head of the toothbrush slightly downwards for upper teeth or slightly upwards for lower teeth so that the bristles can contact the tooth surface near the gum line. Once you have cleaned around the brackets, use a similar technique to clean the tongue side of the teeth. Brush the occlusal (biting) surfaces of the teeth last. Once you are done brushing, check around the braces for remaining plaque and food debris and clean such remaining material with touch-up brushing as necessary. Effective brushing of teeth with braces should take about two minutes, much longer than the 20-30 seconds the average person will spend.

In addition to daily hygiene procedures, we recommend keeping regular visits with your family dentist and hygienist at least every 6 months. Patents with certain gum conditions may need more frequent dental cleanings during orthodontic treatment.

Flossing

Daily flossing is essential during orthodontic treatment to keep plaque and food debris from collecting between the teeth. Orthodontic patients should floss their teeth once daily. Because orthodontic wires typically obstruct the path used in flossing, floss threaders are necessary to guide dental floss around the orthodontic wires. Simply thread the hole in the end of the floss threader as you would a needle, then use the threader to pull the floss under the orthodontic wire between two brackets. Pull one end of the floss between the teeth and use the floss in a “shoeshine” motion to scrub the teeth clean. Repeat this technique for each tooth contact. Because flossing with threaders is time-intensive, it may be helpful to perform this activity in the evenings, possibly while watching a favorite television program.

Adjunctive Procedures

Interdental brushes and uni-tuft brushes may be used to brush larger spaces in between teeth, to access around the brackets and wires, and to keep plaque under control in areas where teeth are missing.