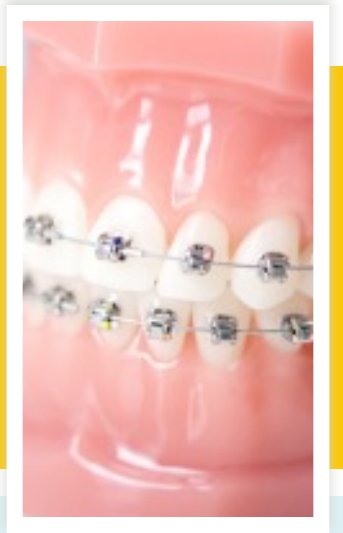


# TAKING CARE OF YOUR BRACES

## TIPS FOR AVOIDING BROKEN BRACKETS

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Millions of people at any given time have braces on their teeth. And one of the concerns that come along with having braces is trying to avoid breaking them. A broken brace (or bracket) can mean more time sitting in the orthodontist's chair as they fix it, but it can also create an additional out-of-pocket expense. Besides, who wants to keep spending time visiting the orthodontist for broken braces if we can do things to avoid it?

### Common Issues

Often times when people have a broken brace, it was caused by something that could have been avoided. Perhaps it was a food that they ate or something that they did, but even if it could not have been avoided, the fact remains that it can be painful, as well as time consuming to address.

Some of the most common broken brace problems include broken brackets, loose bands, loose braces, broken wires, and wires that are sticking out. If something happens like a loose bracket, it can lead to

a broken wire. When you have a broken wire in your mouth, it can be a source of irritation and pain.

### Prevention is Key

The best way to avoid broken braces is to try to prevent them the best that you can. You may not be able to completely avoid them throughout your time of wearing braces, but there are some things you can do to reduce the risks associated.

Here are some tips for avoiding broken braces:

A broken brace or bracket can mean more time sitting in the orthodontist's office

**Avoid Certain Foods.** There are many foods that will increase your chances of a broken brace. You may even know what some of those are already, but others you may not. And if you know about some of them, you may still

find them too tempting to resist, in which case, you should not be all that surprised when you end up with a broken brace. Some of the foods that will increase your chances of breaking your braces include sticky candies (e.g., Tootsie Rolls, taffy, caramel, Starbursts), hard candy



(jolly ranchers), gummy bears, foods high in sugar, gum that isn't sugar free, ice, and popped popcorn.

### **Use Caution with Others**

There are many other foods that can pose a problem if you don't take precautions. These foods should be cut up into small bite-sized pieces and then chewed with the back teeth. They include corn on the cob, carrots of all sizes, bagels, meat, apples, French bread, pizza, and other foods that are hard or overly chewy.

### **Additional Precautions to Take**

It is also important to make sure that you are taking care of your teeth by brushing and flossing each day, and that you don't do things to harm your teeth, such as chew on pens and pencils. You should also avoid biting into things by using your front teeth. Instead, cut the food up small to eat it, so you minimize the risks of breaking or loosening brackets.

Before you begin to eat something that you are not used to eating with your braces, just think for a moment about the impact it may have. Those foods that are hard may need to be avoided, while those foods that are chewy may need to be cut small.

### **Getting Help**

To have broken braces repaired, you will need to contact your orthodontist. The broken appliances take time to fix, and pieces may need to be replaced, rather than just repaired. If you are in pain or discomfort, you should contact your orthodontist right away for an appointment. If you have a broken brace, but you are not in pain, then you should still contact your orthodontist, but let them know there is no pain. They may have you hold off and fix it at your next appointment, which will save you some time and possibly some money.

If you have a broken wire on your braces and it is poking and irritating you, use a pair of nail clippers to clip the wire close to the brace. This will help to reduce the irritation and discomfort while you are waiting to be seen by the orthodontist.

Your braces are going to be a part of your mouth for the duration of the treatment. But that doesn't mean you have to spend additional time and money getting repairs. Keep prevention in mind and take the steps to try to avoid breaking brackets. By keeping the above tips in mind, you should do a lot towards minimizing broken braces!