

Helping Your Child Get Used to Braces

A step-by-step guide to managing discomfort, diet, hygiene, and emotional well-being during orthodontic treatment.

Based on *Get Used To Braces* by Cool Mountain Kids Pediatric Dentistry

Step 1: Manage Initial Discomfort

The first week is the most challenging. Use over-the-counter pain relievers, cold foods, soft treats, warm saltwater rinses, and orthodontic wax to soothe discomfort and irritation.

- Cold foods and beverages naturally numb the mouth.
- Soft, cool treats like yogurt or smoothies can be comforting.
- Orthodontic wax can cover brackets or wires rubbing against cheeks or lips.



Step 2: Adapt to Dietary Changes

Adjust eating habits by avoiding hard, sticky, or chewy foods that can damage braces. Focus on soft foods that require minimal chewing.

- Avoid popcorn, caramel, taffy, chewing gum, hard fruits/vegetables (unless cut small), and chewy breads.
- Enjoy dairy products, soft fruits, mashed potatoes, and soft casseroles.



Step 3: Establish a Solid Oral Hygiene Routine

Prevent plaque buildup by brushing after every meal for at least two minutes with a soft-bristle toothbrush. Floss daily using threaders or orthodontic flossers and consider a fluoride mouthwash.

- Use a soft-bristle toothbrush designed for braces or an electric toothbrush.
- Consider a bathroom chart with small rewards for consistency.



Step 4: Handle Minor Emergencies

Be prepared for minor issues like loose brackets or poking wires. Keep an 'orthodontic emergency kit' with supplies for quick fixes.

- Cover loose brackets with orthodontic wax.
- Use a pencil eraser to flatten poking wires, then cover with wax.
- Keep a kit with wax, mirror, tweezers, and topical anesthetic.



Step 5: Make Adjustments at School

Help your child navigate school with braces by packing a 'braces care kit' and discussing how to handle questions from classmates.

- Include a toothbrush, toothpaste, wax, and a small mirror in the kit.
- Role-play responses to comments about their braces.



Step 6: Stay Active with Braces

Children can continue sports and physical activities with braces by using a properly fitted mouthguard and taking precautions for wind instruments or contact sports.

- Invest in a mouthguard designed for braces.
- Consider a full face shield or mask for contact sports.



Step 7: Provide Emotional Support

Address any self-consciousness or frustration by listening to concerns, reminding them braces are temporary, and pointing out positive changes.

- Remind them that braces are temporary, but the results last a lifetime.
- Help them see that many peers also have braces.
- Consider letting them choose colored bands.



Step 8: Celebrate Milestones and Progress

Acknowledge and celebrate progress, such as straightening teeth or completing appointments, to keep your child motivated throughout treatment.

- Take 'progress photos' every few months.
- Plan a braces-friendly treat after adjustment appointments.
- Point out positive changes as they occur.

Resources & Further Reading

Related guides for this process:

■ Action Sheet: Helping Your Child Get Used to Braces

<https://storage.googleapis.com/pediatric-dentistry-checklists-20260707-8878a5/pediatric-dentistry/Action%20Sheet/get-used-to-braces-action-sheet.pdf>

■ Helping Kids Adjust to Braces (Infographic)

<https://storage.googleapis.com/pediatric-dentistry-checklists-20260707-64863c/pediatric-dentistry/Infographic/get-used-to-braces-infographic.pdf>

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Patience, practical support, and positive reinforcement help children adapt to braces.