

fixed braces and eating intelligently

Diet divides the world's population in innumerable ways – by religion, by culture, by climate, by ethics, by disease, by just about every imaginable category there is. If you need convincing of the role that diet has in defining us, consider the following: diabetics count carbohydrates, olive oil is a staple for Mediterranean countries, vegans avoid any animal products and pork is forbidden by some religious groups.

But I have news. There is another recognisable category and we are brace-wearers. I confess that as a brace-wearer myself, soft foods really turn me on. Soups, smoothies, yoghurts, excite me, mashes, mushes and purees delight me.

Books have already been written called, among others, *The Braces Cookbook* and *The Tender Teeth Cookbook*. What's more, a website (www.archwired.com) has been set up dedicated to braces. It was created by a patient, Lynn, who searched for advice for adult brace-wearers and drew a blank. Her site provides all sorts of information as well as a forum where adults can share advice and experiences.



Lynn's site has a helpful area dedicated to the topic of soft foods and you can search by ingredient or by recipe. It soon becomes clear that crunchy and chewy foods are the enemy. But from personal experience, I would say they are not the only enemies; messy, sloppy foods or anything with spinach are also to be avoided when eating publicly (Popeye must have avoided orthodontics!). As the French writer La Rochefoucauld said: "To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art." In the case of orthodontic patients, if your favourite food is spinach or spaghetti bolognese, eating intelligently can often mean eating alone!

But back to more practical matters – advice on diet from orthodontic specialists will focus on the welfare of the braces and you will be warned against toffees, popcorn, gum and hard foods such as crunchy apples or carrots, nuts and crusty bread. But there is also the health of your teeth to consider and remember, however careful you are about brushing and mouth-rinsing, braces will make it harder to keep your mouth clean. Not only must your oral hygiene be good, but you must watch what you eat. Add into these useful guidelines the restrictions that wearing braces imposes, and you may find that you are eating both more healthily and less. When you thank your orthodontist for your transformed smile, consider whether you should also thank those braces for a new lighter and healthier you!



Here Are A Few Tips On Helpful Ingredients For Future Shopping:

- Go for low acid (pH greater than 4.5) options, such as bananas, mangoes, melons, soups, pasta, milk, dairy foods, vegetables, meat, poultry, seafood and eggs.
- Bear in mind that any recipe you choose must make it easy to bite and chew so any vegetables should be chopped small or cooked or pureed.
- Starchy foods can stick to your teeth and do harm so try and keep snacks like crisps to a minimum. Why not choose wraps, tortilla or pitta to replace conventional breads and consider dishes such as risotto or lasagna for minimum chewing and crunching?
- When it comes to breakfast, porridge is a fantastic proposition, so much easier than muesli which combines crunchiness with chewiness.
- As you know, drinks and foods with high acid content have the most potential for harm. Some

of these may appear quite health-giving, such as fruits and their juices, fruit tea and balsamic vinegar but the acids they contain temporarily soften tooth enamel and can lead to a condition called acid erosion. Be wary of carbonated drinks or over-consumption of anything with a lot of vinegar, such as salad dressings or pickles.

- If you don't already keep sweet foods and drinks to a minimum, you most certainly should when you have braces on.

A Number Of Basic Principles Should Govern What We Consume, Whether Wearing Braces or Not These Are:

- Drink plenty of water
- Eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- Avoid processed foods with hidden fats and sugars
- Limit snacks between meals (Saliva, which is your body's natural defence against tooth decay, needs time to wash away acids that form after eating and drinking)

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