

## Dentistry — Advice Letter to a Patient Starting Fixed Orthodontic Braces

### THE CASE NOTES

**Patient:** Miss Lily Thornton, 16 years old; upper and lower fixed metal braces bonded today; parent present

**Oral hygiene:** Brush after every meal (minimum three times daily) using a fluoride toothpaste; use an interdental brush under the wires; plaque disclosure tablet showed significant build-up around brackets today — hygiene quality critical to avoid white spot lesions (decalcification)

**Diet restrictions:** Avoid hard foods (crusty bread, raw carrots, hard sweets, ice cubes), sticky/chewy foods (toffee, chewing gum, gummy sweets) — these damage brackets and wires; no biting on nails or pencils

**Discomfort:** Soreness for 3–5 days after each adjustment is normal; paracetamol or ibuprofen (adult dose) for pain relief; wax provided for any wire irritating the cheek

**Emergencies:** Loose or broken bracket, poking wire — call the clinic for an urgent repair. Swallowed bracket: monitor symptoms; if choking or difficulty breathing, call 999

**Reviews:** Monthly appointments — do not miss them; treatment progress depends on regular adjustments

**Task:** Write an advice letter to Miss Thornton (and her parent) explaining how to care for her braces and what to do if something goes wrong.

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### WHAT TO INCLUDE

**+ Brushing after every meal, interdental brushes under wires, and the white spot lesion risk**

White spot lesions are the most common avoidable complication of fixed appliances. The plaque disclosure finding today makes this a personalised, evidence-based instruction.

**+ Food restrictions by category, not just a list**

A category approach — 'hard foods such as raw carrots and crusty bread' — is more useful than a specific list, as the patient can generalise to unlisted foods.

**+ The emergency protocol: call the clinic for a loose bracket; 999 if swallowed and breathing affected**

Patients frequently delay calling about bracket emergencies. Naming the specific action and when to escalate prevents delay.

### WHAT TO LEAVE OUT

**– The full orthodontic treatment plan and predicted timeline**

An advice letter is about living with the braces today. 'Your regular monthly adjustments will guide your treatment progress' covers the ongoing commitment.

**– Biomechanical explanation of how fixed braces work**

One sentence of plain-language context is the right level for a patient care letter.

### CRITERION IN FOCUS · GENRE & STYLE

# OET Case Notes

Dentistry · Intermediate · Advice letter · to Patient

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A letter addressed to a 16-year-old (parent copied) requires calibration: formal enough to be professional, accessible enough for a teenager to understand independently. Avoid clinical jargon — 'decalcification' becomes 'permanent white patches on your teeth that are hard to remove'. Use direct address ('you should brush after every meal'). The parent is in the background; the patient is the primary audience.

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