

Don't Eat That: Foods to Avoid While Wearing Braces

The goals of braces are simple: give wearers straight teeth and a terrific smile. To reach this end, however, wearers must hold up their end of the bargain by doing more than brushing and flossing regularly. Not to spoil your appetite, but some foods can loosen or break braces and should be scratched from your menu—at least until the braces come off.

Here are your braces' biggest enemies:

- **Apples:** Don't bite into a whole one! Cut it into thin wedges first.
- **Bagels and hard rolls:** Convicted culprits of bending wires and loosening brackets.
- **Beef jerky:** Your braces don't stand a chance against this leathery food.
- **Bubble gum:** Trust us, there's nothing worse than spending hours picking gum from your braces.
- **Candy canes or suckers:** You might weaken and take a bite!
- **Caramels and chewy candies:** And you thought bubble gum was messy.
- **Chicken wings:** You can enjoy these if you first cut the meat off the bone.
- **Corn chips:** Anything that crunches when you bite it is bad news for braces.
- **Corn on the cob:** If you must, remove the kernels from the cob with a knife, then enjoy!
- **Fingernails:** Now's the perfect time to kick that bad habit.
- **Fruit Roll-Ups:** See bubble gum.
- **Gummi anything:** See bubble gum.
- **Hard candies:** Can loosen wires and dislodge brackets.
- **Hard cookies:** Good news: You can have these if you soften them with milk.
- **Ice cubes:** No crunching!
- **Nuts:** All varieties—including peanuts, cashews and almonds—are off limits.
- **Pears:** Just like you would with apples, cut them into thin wedges first.
- **Peanut brittle:** Anything that crunches when you bite it is bad news for braces.
- **Pens and pencils:** Don't laugh; a lot of students can't stop chewing on these inedible school supplies.
- **Popcorn:** Great with movies, bad with braces.
- **Pizza Crust:** Good news: the rest of the pie is fine!
- **Pretzels:** Bends wires, loosens bands and knocks off brackets
- **Raw carrots:** If have a Bugs Bunny-like adoration for these orange veggies, steam or boil them for a much less crunchy consistency.
- **Ribs:** Just like you would with chicken wings, take the meat off the bone first.
- **Sugary candy:** Can lodge beneath brackets and wires, leading to tooth decay.
- **Taffy:** It's best to avoid this stuff entirely—even if you don't have braces!