



Foods To Avoid with Braces and What to Eat Instead

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Foods To Avoid

Safe Alternatives

Hard Foods

Hard foods can break brackets or bend wires.

Avoid Examples:

- Nuts (almonds, peanuts, cashews)
- Hard candies and jawbreakers
- Ice cubes
- Corn on the cob (biting directly)
- Hard taco shells
- Bagels, hard rolls, or French bread crusts

Alternatives:

- Nut butters (peanut butter, almond butter)
- Soft bread, tortillas, or pita bread
- Off-the-cob corn or mashed corn
- Soft tacos or burritos

Sticky Foods

Sticky textures cling to brackets, increase risk of cavities, and are difficult to clean.

Avoid Examples:

- Caramel, toffee, taffy
- Chewy candy (gummy bears, fruit snacks, licorice)
- Honey and sticky granola bars
- Chewing gum

Alternatives:

- Soft chocolate that melts easily
- Sugar-free pudding, mousse, or yogurt
- Fresh fruit slices instead of fruit snacks
- Sugar-free mints instead of gum

Chewy Foods

Excessive chewing can loosen brackets and pull wires.

Avoid Examples:

- Bagels, pizza crust, sub rolls
- Beef jerky
- Large bites of tough meats

Alternatives:

- Soft sandwiches on sliced bread
- Shredded chicken, ground beef, or turkey
- Meatloaf or tender fish

Crunchy Foods

Crunchy foods can snap wires or pop brackets off teeth.

Avoid Examples:

- Popcorn (especially kernels)
- Chips, pretzels, and crackers
- Raw carrots, apples, celery
- Hard granola

Alternatives:

- Popcorn alternatives: puffed corn or rice cakes
- Soft potato chips (baked or lightly cooked)
- Sliced bananas, grapes, or melon
- Steamed or cooked carrots, applesauce, or cut fruit into thin slices

Sugary Foods and Drinks

Sugar fuels plaque buildup around brackets, leading to cavities and staining.

Avoid Examples:

- Regular soda and sports drinks
- Sweetened teas and juices
- Candy bars
- Frosted cakes, donuts, pastries

Alternatives:

- Water with fruit infusions (lemon, cucumber, berries)
- Milk, smoothies, or sugar-free flavored water
- Dark chocolate (soft, small portions)
- Plain yogurt with fresh fruit

Foods Requiring Biting with Front Teeth

Biting into whole foods can snap brackets off front teeth.

Avoid Examples:

- Whole apples or pears
- Corn on the cob
- Whole carrots
- Ribs or chicken wings

Alternatives:

- Apple slices or pear slices
- Off-the-cob corn
- Steamed, thin carrot sticks
- Boneless chicken or shredded meats

Safe Snacks and Meal Ideas for Braces Patients

- **Dairy:** Yogurt, soft cheese, cottage cheese, milkshakes
- **Soft Grains:** Pasta, rice, oatmeal, soft pancakes, muffins without nuts
- **Fruits:** Bananas, berries, melon, applesauce, soft peaches
- **Vegetables:** Steamed broccoli, mashed potatoes, zucchini, cooked spinach
- **Proteins:** Eggs, meatballs, turkey slices, fish, tofu
- **Treats:** Smoothies, ice cream (without nuts or caramel), soft cookies

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