



Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,
Woodstock's Orthodontic Specialist

Q: My neighbor's daughter had her braces removed and had white stains on them. Is that from the braces?

A: It is not FROM the braces. It is from plaque that was gathering around the braces while they were on. I am somewhat of a fanatic about this in my office, for that very reason. Actually, anyone can get white spots, called decalcification, on their teeth, even if they do not have braces. Simply leave plaque on your teeth and the bacteria living in your mouth that makes the plaque and produces acids as a waste product will begin to demineralize your enamel. This demineralization is the early stage of tooth decay. Most of the time we don't see it starting because it usually occurs in between teeth or in the fissures of molar biting surfaces. Most people have fewer plaque deposits on the front surfaces of their teeth because of lips and cheeks actively sweeping across the surfaces, and because most people do at least brush the front of their teeth. However, when obstacles like orthodontic appliances are placed, the deposits of food and plaque tend to increase because bacteria now have places to hide, and the likelihood of decalcification also increases. One of my biggest disappointments is creating a perfect occlusion and alignment for someone and facing multiple areas of decalcification when we are finished. And yes, it is a permanent scar on the tooth surface. Sometimes bleaching will whiten the rest of the enamel so the white spots "blend in" more, but that is not always successful. Cosmetic bonding or porcelain veneers can also cover this, but what an expense for a preventable situation!

!Dr. Christensen's column appears weekly in the Northwest Herald. Questions to be answered and treatment inquiries may be directed to: **Woodstock Orthodontics, c/o Kirk H. Christensen, DDS, 226 West Judd Street, Woodstock, IL 60098, Phone: 815-337-5522**