

Palatal Expander

What it does:

Sometimes a patient's upper jaw is too narrow and it needs to be widened. In such cases, a palatal expander is used. The device is designed to spread the two halves of the upper jaw apart. New bone then fills in between the two halves and the upper jaw remains permanently wider. There are several designs for these expanders, but all have a center screw mechanism.

Activation:

The expander is typically activated twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. The doctor may vary the turning instructions if indicated. A key needs to be placed into the key hole in the center of the screw and then gently pushed toward the back of the mouth one notch (until a new hole in the front of the screw is completely visible). During the activation period, you will be seen in the office approximately once each week. After the activation period is completed, the expander is then locked and it remains in the mouth for approximately six months.

What to expect:

The first three days will be the hardest for you. Your mouth will feel unusually full, speaking will be awkward, and you may have more saliva than normal. Typically, a space will appear between the two upper front teeth. This is absolutely normal. Eventually the space begins to close on its own.

Care of your expander:

Your expander is strong, but can be broken by carelessness. In general, you need to avoid foods which are hard or chewy. For example, you should not eat caramel, taffy, jaw breakers, etc. Brushing your expander is as important as brushing your teeth. Make sure to brush the area between the expander and gum. Sometimes, food or plaque may cover the key hole, so be sure to brush that area as well.

IF YOU NOTICE THE APPLIANCE IS LOOSE, PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE SO IT CAN BE RECEMENTED or adjusted.