

# Expanders

## Expanders

### **Purpose**

The fixed expansion appliance is used to widen the upper dental arch in order to improve the bite, and/ or create more space for crowded teeth.

### **Wear**

Since the appliance is cemented to the upper teeth, it is worn 24 hours per day.

### **Activation**

The appliance is activated by turning the inner screw with a special key. Upon activation most patients feel pressure in the upper jaw and nose area; this is normal. Your appliance is to be turned \_\_\_\_ per day for \_\_\_\_ days. If significant and/ or prolonged discomfort occurs after turning, please call.

### **Eating**

Initially there will be some awkwardness in eating and swallowing, but this will soon go away. Your diet will need some slight changes. For the first 3 days, stick to liquids and very soft foods such as eggs, yogurt, mashed potatoes, pasta, etc...chewing small pieces is helpful. After this short period of adaptation most foods can be consumed. You should stay away from hard foods (raw carrots, nuts, ice cubes, hard candy...) and sticky foods (gum, caramel, chewy candy...).

### **Cleaning**

It is very important to keep your appliance clean. Food and tartar can build up on the edges so we recommend a quick rinse or scrub after meals; then at least once a day brush your expander thoroughly. It is very important to scrub the edges of your expander at the gumline so that redness and soreness do not develop. A water pik can be helpful for cleaning the palate side of the expansion screw.

### **Speech**

Your expander will usually alter speech for several weeks as you get used to it. Read out loud slowly for 5 to 10 minutes each night to practice your pronunciation. This speeds up the adaptation process.

### **Comfort**

At the sides of the appliance are some metal attachments that may initially irritate the inside of the cheeks. Use the soft wax over this area while your mouth is adapting. Also quite helpful is the use of warm salt water rinses twice daily for the first week ( $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of salt in  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of warm water).

### **Other Things**

You will usually notice a space opening between the upper two front teeth. Do not be alarmed, this is a normal occurrence. If the appliance becomes loose, do not turn it and call the office for an appointment right away. Keep the appliance seated in the mouth. After the active phase of expansion, there will be a holding period to allow the upper jaw to stabilize. This usually lasts from 6 to 10 months

### **Parting Words**

When patients use this appliance according to our recommendations, we have had excellent success. Our best wishes to you as you begin an exciting journey towards a super smile! If you or a family member has any questions along the way, just ask us!

## Additional Instructions for the Palatal Expander

### Day 1:

1. It is normal for the teeth to become sore after the expander is first placed. Tylenol or Ibuprofen will help to relieve the tenderness.

### Day 2 and the following days:

1. If the teeth are not very sore, begin turning the expander. Pressure in the upper jaw or in the cheek area is normal and will last for several minutes.
2. The expander should be turned at approximately the same time each day.
3. It is normal for a space to develop between the front teeth. The space will close after the expansion phase of treatment is complete

### Please note:

- If a band feels loose on either side of the expander, do not turn the expander. Call the office to schedule an appointment to have the appliance recemented.
- It is important that the expander be turned every day unless instructed otherwise. If it is not possible to turn the expander on a particular day, turn the expander in the morning and evening (12 hour interval) the next day.
- The expander should NEVER be turned twice at one time.
- Do not hesitate to call the office if there are any questions or problems turning the expander.