



BRENT HOGGAN ORTHODONTICS

EXPANDER

Description: A rapid palate expander, or RPE, is a tooth-borne appliance that is used to expand the upper jaw. It consists of bands that anchor the expander to the teeth, an expansion screw, and heavy wires that connect these components.

Purpose/When to Use: An RPE is routinely used to correct a cross-bite, which occurs when the upper back teeth fit inside the lower back teeth. It is also sometimes used to widen the upper jaw in order to make room for crowded teeth in cases where the upper jaw is too narrow.

How it Works: A palate expander works by spreading apart the two halves of the upper jaw (in technical terms, it opens the mid-palatal suture). In other words, an expander is an orthopedic appliance, that causes the upper jaw to grow wider than it would on its own.

How Long Does it Stay In: For patients with a cross-bite, the expander is typically kept in place, as a passive holding appliance, for 12 months. If removed too early, there is risk of the upper jaw returning to its former size.

What to Expect: Speech and swallowing will be temporarily affected as the tongue is adapting to this new appliance near the roof of the mouth. Most patients find that it takes a couple of weeks for the tongue to adapt. Soft foods, which are easier to swallow, are helpful at first. Also, when the expander is turned, most patients will feel some tightness, that lasts for only a few minutes. It is not unusual for the cheeks and the tongue to be sore for the first few days, while the mouth gets used to the new palate expander. Expansion also causes significant changes in the bite, and while these changes are occurring, some of the teeth may become sore when chewing.

How Often to Turn: The optimum rate of expansion is 2 turns per day, though some older patients will find it more comfortable to start with 1 turn a day, and work their way to 2 turns. Also, many patients find it more comfortable, especially at the beginning, to break the turns up into 1 turn in the morning and 1 turn at night.

Care Instructions: Regular brushing is important to keep the expander clean, but since food tends to lodge above the expander, a water flosser (e.g. WaterPik) is also recommended. To keep the expander from coming loose, avoid eating sticky candy.

Possible Issues: On rare occasions, the expander may become loose, or may break at one of the solder joints – if this happens, call our office immediately. Also, each turn must be completed from front to back, with the key being removed in the back position. If the key is removed even slightly before the turn has been completed, then it will not be possible to insert the key and start the next turn. In these cases, the previous turn must first be completed. Don't hesitate to call us if you have any questions or concerns.

8120 S. Holly St., Suite 206
Centennial, CO 80122
303.730.2083 v 303.730.0707 f

10219 Parkglenn Way, Suite 101
Parker, CO 80138
303.840.8505 v 303.840.9124 f