



ASHBURN  
PEDIATRIC DENTAL CENTER  
(703) 726-4333

## ORTHODONTIC APPLIANCE FACT SHEET

### Palatal Expander

Your palatal expander fits in the roof of your mouth. It is made of metal and attaches to bands that are custom fit and cemented to your upper first molars. This appliance is not removable. The purpose of the expander is to increase the width of the upper jaw. This is done by turning the screw that is in the center of the appliance. You will do this at a frequency and for a period of time directed by the Doctor.

### Things to Know

- You may notice a space develop between your upper central teeth. This is normal.
- Avoid sticky foods such as taffy, caramels, gummy candies, starburst, skittles, and gum as they might loosen the appliance. Also, avoid hard foods such as ice, nuts, and hard candy as these might break the palatal expander.
- Thorough, but careful, brushing around the appliance is important to keep it and your teeth clean and free from cavities.
- After expansion is complete, the palatal expander will remain in place for several months.
- Activate your expander as directed by the doctor. **If you need to reschedule, cancel or miss an appointment after the expander is delivered, to prevent over-expansion, STOP TURNING the appliance at the original date of the rescheduled/cancelled/missed appointment (when you were supposed to be seen).** When the Doctor evaluates you at your next appointment, he will direct you whether additional turns are needed.
- After each turn, you will notice a slight pressure on the teeth. This pressure usually goes away after a few hours. Do not turn the screw immediately before bed, as this pressure might keep you awake. The best time to turn the screw is after school in the early afternoon.
- Initially, your teeth might feel sore after the placement of this appliance. Also, you might notice extra saliva in your mouth and slight speech impairment. This is expected and should go back to normal after a few days.
- Speak out loud as much as possible during the first couple of days to allow your tongue to get used to this appliance.
- Each patient is unique, and their needs are different. For some people, the use of an over-the-counter medicine similar to that taken for a headache can be used to help the soreness. If this is needed, it is usually only for the first day or two.
- Certain areas of the palatal expander or bands to which it attaches might bother your cheeks and tongue at first. This usually goes away after a few days, but the use of wax or wet cotton balls will help to minimize the discomfort while your mouth is adjusting. Rinsing with warm salt water or Peroxyl and the use of Benzodent will help bothered areas feel better and return to normal.
- Please call us immediately if anything feels loose or broken.

### Emergencies

If you have an after-hours emergency that cannot be resolved after following the instructions provided, please call Dr. Joe on his cell phone at (703) 597-8558.