

Post-Operative Instructions: Palatal Expander

Your upper jaw expander has been successfully fitted today. This appliance gently widens the upper jaw by stretching the natural growth plate. Depending on your child's age, we are using either a slow or semi-rapid expansion approach. Your personal instructions will be given to you by your dentist.

Please follow the below guidelines carefully to ensure the treatment progresses smoothly and comfortably.

How to Turn (Activate) the Expander

The activation key has been handed to your parent/guardian. Turns should be performed **as prescribed by your dentist**.

- **The Turn:** Turn the screw as demonstrated during your appointment steadily from front to back (upper teeth to lower teeth). A full turn is complete only when the next flat side of the hexagon is fully visible.
- **Removing the Key:** Once the turn is complete, remove the key by carefully pulling it straight back **toward the throat**. Be careful not to pull it forward, or you will accidentally undo the turn.
- **What to Feel:** You should feel a distinct resistance while turning the screw. If the key turns too easily without rotating into the next position, or if you feel no resistance at all, please let us know.

What to Expect (Normal Side Effects)

- **Pressure and Discomfort:** Mild discomfort, tingling or a feeling of pressure across the roof of the mouth, nose, or cheekbones is completely normal, especially during the first few days and immediately after a turn. You can use over-the-counter **paracetamol** as required to manage this initial soreness.
- **Speech and Saliva:** Extra saliva, minor swallowing difficulties, and a temporary lisp are very common as the tongue adjusts to the appliance. This will improve significantly over the next week as your child adapts.

- **Gaps Appearing:** After about a week of turning, a noticeable space may open up between the front two teeth. Do not be alarmed—this is a normal sign that the expander is working and the jaw is widening. This gap will be managed later in treatment.

Diet Guidelines

The appliance is sturdy, but hard or sticky foods can bend the arms or dislodge the bands.

- **Initial Diet:** Stick to softer foods for the first few days if the mouth is feeling tender.
- **Foods to Avoid:** Strictly avoid very hard, sticky, or chewy foods. This includes chewing gum, caramels, hard lollies, and crunchy nuts.
- **Preparation:** Cut regular food into smaller, bite-sized pieces to reduce the strain on the appliance when chewing.

Cleaning and Maintenance

Food particles and plaque easily trap around the expander, which can irritate the gums.

- **Brushing:** Clean the expander at least **twice daily and rinse with water after every meal**. Use a soft-bristled toothbrush to carefully clean around the appliance.
- **Extra Help:** We highly recommend using a water flosser to easily flush out trapped food from the roof of the mouth where a toothbrush cannot easily reach.

When to Contact Us

Please call the clinic immediately if:

- The appliance feels loose or has completely broken away from a tooth.
- A turn cannot be completed, or you are struggling to turn the screw for any reason.
- Your child experiences severe or prolonged pain that paracetamol does not relieve.

Next Appointment

We have scheduled your follow-up visit for **3-5 weeks from today**. At this appointment, we will assess the expansion progress, check the appliance, and make any necessary adjustments.

Parents, please do not hesitate to contact the practice if you have any questions or concerns before then.