



Palate Widening Appliance

The palate widening appliance is an orthodontic appliance used to expand the width of the upper jaw or roof of the mouth and teeth.

Reasons to widen the upper arch:

1. By widening the upper arch, the upper teeth may line up better with the lower teeth, giving the patient a better bite and preventing the lower jaw from shifting.
2. By correcting the bite and jaw shift, stress may be relieved on the temporomandibular joint (jaw joint).
3. A narrow upper arch may restrict the breathing passages located above and widening the palate widens the passages. The patient may then breathe better.
4. Widening the palate can make more room for crowded teeth.

What happens as the palate is widened?

The expanding action separates the elastic membrane in the center of the palate. Expansion of the arch is usually completed in 2-4 weeks. However, the appliance remains in place for approximately 3-6 months to allow new bone tissue to fill the space.

Widening the palate temporarily causes a space to open between the two upper front teeth. For some people, the procedure causes some discomfort during the first week. There may be a feeling of pressure or tingling in the roof of the mouth or at the bridge of the nose. Tylenol® or Advil® will effectively relieve the discomfort.

Who activates the appliance?

Once our dentist has cemented the appliance in place, the parent will activate it once every day. To activate the appliance, insert the key into the hole or slot in the middle of the appliance. Gently and steadily push the key from the front toward the back of the mouth until a stop is reached. Remove the key in the direction of the back of the mouth. Do not back up. By pushing the key as far back as possible, a new keyhole automatically moves into the original position and is ready for the next activation.

Parent and Patient Responsibilities:

1. Activate the appliance once per day.
2. Maintain good oral hygiene by brushing and rinsing several times each day.
3. Return to the office if you are experiencing difficulty turning the key. The appliance is ineffective if not activated once each day.

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