

Rapid Palatal Expander (RPE) - Instructions and Care

Congratulations, your orthodontic treatment has started! This procedure also allows for the creation of more space for the eruption of the permanent teeth and correction of the bite.

This sheet is provided to give you information on how to activate your expander, what to expect and hygiene instructions. If you have other questions or problems, please call the office.

Your expander will be activated 1-2 turns a night for up to 6 weeks. Be sure to know the number of daily turns recommended by the doctor.



Activation

It is recommended to activate the appliance at bedtime so by the next morning, the pressure from the turn is gone. If you forget one night, you can activate it once in the morning and then again that night, but no more than two turns in one day.

- 1) You will be given a key to activate the RPE.
- 2) Place key in anterior hole of appliance, towards front teeth.
- 3) There is an etched arrow in the appliance pointing in the direction the key should be pushed.
- 4) Push key completely towards back of mouth until it stops and the next hole can be seen fully in front of appliance.
- 5) Remove the key carefully so the new hole for the next activation is completely visible.

Hygiene for your RPE

Brush the appliance including the metal bars & screw in the same way you brush your teeth. When you are unable to brush after eating, use water swished around in your mouth to help dislodge any food particles.

Diet

At first, eating will be more difficult; take small bites & eat soft foods until this is overcome (usually a few days to a week). After that, you should be able to eat almost everything you did before with some exceptions (see No-No Food List).

What to expect

You will notice several things as the expander does its job.

1. Speech

Your speech will be affected. This is not permanent & the best way to get used to this is to speak aloud as much as possible; try reading out loud or singing.

2. Soreness

Your teeth may be sore for the first few days. To help with this you may want to take what you would normally take for a headache; however, chewing & talking are the best ways to get your mouth used to this new feeling. Do not skip days, because skipping

days will only extend the amount of time you experience soreness & may complicate treatment.

Pressure or tingling of the mouth, tongue, cheeks & nose Your bite will feel off as the width of your palate changes

As the palate expands the teeth will not fit together properly, this is normal.

3. Space between your front teeth

Spaces between the front teeth are good sign! However, it can be disheartening or upsetting from a cosmetic point of view. By the time you to stop turning the screw, the space may look large enough to fit another tooth. This space should close by itself within a short time.

4. Potential Trouble and Problems

Please turn appliance as instructed. Do not continue to activate the appliance beyond this time. At your next appointment, you will be told if your expansion is completed or needs to continue.

The most common problem we see with the RPE is an incomplete activation where the key cannot be seated for the next activation. You should see the next hole completely in the RPE when the key is removed. You may try to “find” the hole with the key, but only try a few times for this can often result in frustration. Call us if you have this problem and we will get you in to correct it.

If one of the arms gets bent or is pinching the gum tissue, please call so we can adjust your RPE.

If the RPE ever feels loose, the bands should be cemented and not moving on the teeth, please call to have the appliance re-cemented. You should carefully follow the food list and avoid sticky, hard foods. Yes, that means no gum!

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