

Expander

Turn Schedule

One turn every:

Day

Every other day

Once a week

For _____ days/weeks

What is an Expander?

The Rapid Palatal Expander (RPE) widens the upper jaw. It allows more space for the permanent teeth, and corrects any crossbite of the rear teeth. We will provide personal instructions on how to turn the expander screw, and we will have you do an actual turn before you leave our office. It may seem difficult at first, but it's actually quite simple to do.

Will it hurt?

Expanders do not typically cause much discomfort. You may experience a little discomfort the first few days as you get used to it. It will NOT be a sharp, needle-like type of pain. You may feel some pressure after the screw has been turned. This is normal. To help alleviate any discomfort, we recommend taking whatever medicine you normally take for mild pain (Advil/Ibuprofen, Tylenol, or Aspirin). If the braces on the sides of the bands irritate your cheeks, place a small ball of wax over them. Your cheeks will "toughen up" after a week or so and it will no longer be a problem.



What else will I experience?

Expanders do not typically cause much discomfort, but they do require some getting used to, usually about 2-3 days. At first you may find it awkward to swallow. This feeling will get better very quickly. At first you may have excess saliva. It will also take a few days to get used to eating with the expander. When you leave our office after getting your expander, make sure the first thing you eat is something simple, so that you can get used to chewing and swallowing with it. Initially, a cold treat of ice cream or popsicles may relieve some uncomfortable symptoms and help you get used to eating with the expander in place.

You may find it challenging to speak at first. A helpful tip is to read out loud for a few days until speech improves.

It is also normal that you may notice a space developing between your front two teeth. This is actually a good sign that your jaw is truly expanding as intended. Don't worry, as the space will close on its own a few weeks after you finish turning your expander.

What should I avoid eating so that the expander stays in place?

- Avoid sticky foods because they could loosen the bands (rings) that keep the expander on your teeth. This will cause the expander to become loose, and may lead to cavities.
- Examples of sticky foods to avoid: Gum, Laffy Taffies, Airheads, jelly beans, caramel, Tootsie Rolls, gummie bears, Starbursts, and any similar type of food.
- Also avoid extremely crunchy foods as they can bend the bands, such as hard granola bars.
- Avoid popcorn as the shells can get trapped under the expander and lead to infections.

How do I keep it clean?

It is important that the space between the expander and the roof of your mouth be kept clean so that you avoid any irritation from food accumulation. After snacks or meals, swish some water in your mouth to dislodge the food from underneath the expander screw. We do not recommend trying to suck the material from the appliance as it could lead to food going down the airway. You can also use a thin coffee-type straw if necessary, and some people prefer to use a Water Pik, although it is not essential.

Use a soft toothbrush, whether mechanical or manual. When brushing your teeth make sure to brush all around the bands (rings) that are on your back teeth. Food tends to build up around the bands, especially under the small hooks on the braces. Make sure to angle your toothbrush to clean under the hooks where your gums end and your tooth begins.

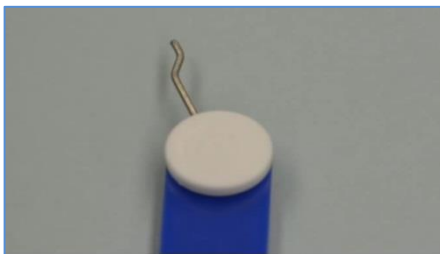
Not brushing well can leave lots of food stuck around the bands. This can cause your gums to become swollen and red (gingivitis). It can also cause permanent white spots on your teeth, and these white spot can turn into cavities. Proper brushing will prevent this.

How to turn the expander:

We will show you at the office how to turn the screw. We will also have you or your parent do the first turn with us observing and coaching. It's really not difficult at all once you get used to it. Below is a summary of how to turn the screw. If you are still uncertain, there are many videos on YouTube that provide visual instructions. Just search for "Orthodontic Expander." An excellent one is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifzSh56yScA>

The appliance is activated in the following manner:

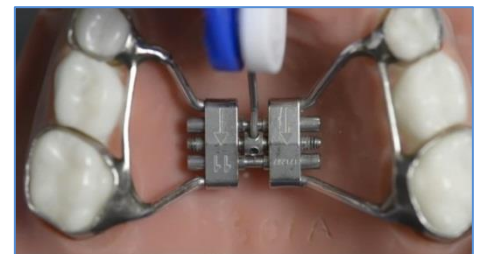
1. The person who will be turning the expander screw, usually a parent, should be seated on a flat surface, such as a carpeted floor or a bed, with his or her back supported by the base of a couch or wall. The patient should lay down with his or her head on the parent's lap, with his or her face tipped up and back towards the parent. You may find it helpful to use a flashlight. If you have glasses make sure to use them.
2. The appliance is activated by inserting the blue handled key into the hole at the center of the appliance. Position the metal prong of the key sticking out straight. When the key prong lines up well with the hole, the key should easily slide in to the hole of the screw. Slide it into the hole of the screw and make sure it goes in all the way.
3. Your goal is one complete turn per session. Slowly swivel the key downward and back towards the throat. Do a single turn until it won't move any further back. The metal prong of the key will now be on a tight angle relative to the blue handle. The next hole of the expansion screw should also become visible.
4. You have now completed the turn. Remove the key from the appliance by sliding it downward and back towards the throat, making sure not to undo any of the turn you just made. You should still see the next hole in the screw and the metal prong from the key should be on the same tight angle as it was when you finished the turn. If it is straight or only on a slight angle, or if you can't see the next hole in its entirety, you most likely undid part of the turn. To correct this, angle the metal key prong relative to the blue handle, and find the hole in the screw closer to the throat, and finish off the previous turn once again. It is very important not to backtrack on the screw often as it will strip the threads of the screw and no longer work properly.



Key prong straight forward



Line up with hole towards front



Insert prong fully into hole



Turn down and back a full turn



Remove key without undoing turn

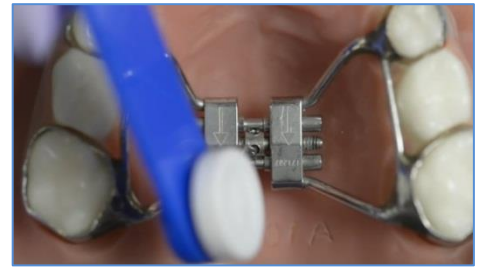
Important note:

It is important to turn the expander according to the schedule we instruct and then stop. If you miss your next appointment, don't just keep on turning!

Problem Solving – “I tried to do a new turn and I can't find the next hole.”

This means you likely backtracked on your previous turn, or the expander may have backtracked on its own. If you think the screw is backtracking on its own every time after you do a turn, please call our office. Otherwise, what you need to do is finish off the previous turn so that the next hole becomes visible for the new turn. Angle the metal key prong relative to the blue handle, and find the hole in the screw closer to the throat, and finish off the previous turn once again. An excellent video showing how to do this is:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJE4JQqbopA>



If cannot see next hole, insert prong into hole closer to throat and finish off previous turn

Problem Solving - What to do if the expander becomes loose:

If you think the expander feels loose from your teeth (even though not visibly), or you are sure it is loose, stop turning it any further and do not try to remove it on your own. Please call us to schedule to have it rebounded within a few days. Waiting longer may cause the appliance to no longer fit, or possibly to break. **Even if your appointment is coming up soon, please make sure to call in advance to inform us it is loose so that we can be ready at your appointment to rebound it.** If we aren't informed in advance and you are scheduled for a very short appointment, we may not have time that day to rebound it. If it completely comes out of your mouth make sure to bring it to your visit.

If you have any questions regarding the management of this appliance, or any other aspect of treatment, please call our office.

Expansion Tracker:

Turn the number of turns prescribed and stop. Mark off each turn for your own reference and tell us the number at your next visit.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48