

PALATAL EXPANSION APPLIANCES

Certain types of orthodontic problems are caused by a restriction of the growth in width of the upper jaw (maxilla). In this situation, the roof of the mouth (palate) is often narrow and high. Often, there is a one-sided (unilateral) or two-sided (bilateral) crossbite of the back teeth, and the front teeth may be crowded. Palatal split appliances are used to widen the maxilla and palate in order to correct posterior crossbites.

This type of appliance works by painlessly separating or spreading the maxillary suture, the joint that runs along the midline of the upper jaw. Once this joint has spread, the two sides knit back together and new bone is laid down to make the jaw wider. Because this suture fuses in middle adulthood, the palatal split appliance can only be used in children, teenagers, and young adults.

Your palatal spreading device won't be painful. Your teeth will be a bit uncomfortable for a day or two, and sometimes you may feel a little "itching" in the roof of your mouth about a week after the appliance is cemented into place. Don't worry; this is normal as the gum fibers there stretch and expand. You may take an over-the-counter analgesic such as Tylenol, Advil, or Aleve as needed for any discomfort you may experience. After a few days, you will also notice a small space open up between your two front teeth. This is a sign that the appliance is working properly and separating the suture like we want it to. Don't worry, though; this space will close up as quickly as it opened just as soon as you quit turning the screw.



DeWayne B. McCamish, D.D.S., M.S., PC
Marie B. Farrar, D.D.S., M.S.
Jeril R. Cooper, IV, D.M.D.
4610 Brainerd Road, Ste 3
Chattanooga, TN 37411
423-622-4173

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TURNING INSTRUCTIONS:

Insert the wrench onto the hex nut at the center of the appliance. If the arm of the wrench is not near your upper front teeth, you may need to flip the wrench over to find the best starting position. Turn the screw mechanism by moving the wrench down until it touches your lower front teeth with your mouth open wide. Do not allow the wrench to slip back up while removing it from the hex nut. If you have been instructed to turn the screw mechanism more than once, you will need to flip the wrench over again.



RETURN VISITS:

Until your jaw is wide enough, we will need to see you every 2 weeks.

At these appointments we will check your progress, making sure that the appliance is not loose and that you are keeping it clean. After your palate is wide enough and your crossbite is corrected, we will instruct you to stop turning the appliance. Although you will no longer be turning the screw, we will leave the appliance in place for another four or five months to allow new bone to fill in the space. At this point, we will only need to see you every six weeks. After the appliance is removed, we may make a retainer for you to wear or place a transpalatal arch.

SPECIAL CARE INSTRUCTIONS:

- Swish your mouth out with water or mouthwash after eating anything.
- Brush as usual.
- At least once a day, use a Water Pik oral spray to flush food out from between the roof of your mouth and the bars.
- Don't eat anything hard, sticky, or chewy.
- Never eat nuts or sunflower seeds with this appliance in (they can pack underneath it and cause bad gum infections).
- Popcorn kernels are difficult to rinse from under the palatal; therefore, please avoid eating popcorn during your entire course of treatment.

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