

Your Rapid Palatal Expander (RPE)

The appliance you have been given is called a Rapid Palatal Expander or RPE. It is used to widen the upper jaw when it is too narrow. This device works by painlessly spreading the two halves of the upper jaw apart. New bone then grows in between the two halves and the upper jaw is wider.

Instructions:

1. Keep the RPE very clean by using the Water Pick, floss and toothbrush daily. Be sure to floss the appliance at least once each day. This is very important to keep the gum tissue under the appliance healthy.
2. Turning Instructions: Follow instructions given to you at the office. Keep track of the turns on a calendar. The number of turns is more important than the number of days it takes to complete the turns.
3. Beware of gum. It will stick to you RPE like glue.
4. During the active expansion state, there will be weekly or biweekly appointments. After this stage is complete, the appliance will remain in the mouth as a retainer for 3 more months, and then it will be removed.
5. A space will develop between your two front teeth during widening. This is normal and means that your RPE is working. The space usually goes away after you stop turning your appliance.

Precautions:

1. If the RPE is not kept clean, an infection can occur. If this happens, it may be necessary to remove it, wait for healing and start over.
2. On a very rare occasion, it is possible that some tiny blood vessels may burst during widening. This causes a hematoma (a bruise). This is not a health problem. However, it can result in temporary black eyes.
3. There may be some minor discomfort with the appliance. Discomfort can be in the teeth, jaw, or even the bridge of the nose. For relief, take whatever you would take for a headache about 30 minutes before turning the key.