



**Some orthodontic
problems are easier
to correct if
found early.**

**PALATAL
EXPANSION**

EXPANSION



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EXPANSION

WHAT IS EXPANSION?

While there may be some minor tooth movement, the goal of palatal expansion is to broaden the upper jaw. This expansion occurs when the growth plate or suture in the middle of the palate is stretched and the two halves are pushed apart.

The expander may push against the teeth, the palatal tissue or temporary anchors (TADS) that are placed into the bone. As the two halves are pushed apart, new bone is added in the center of your palate. Expanders may be in place from a few months to more than a year.

BENEFITS?

Palatal expansion can correct upper and lower jaw width problems (crossbites) or can help to reduce crowding in abnormally narrow arches. In younger patients, this may reduce the need for extractions or prevent impacted teeth.

Crossbites not corrected in growing patients may require surgery for correction in adulthood. Crossbites that are left uncorrected may lead to abnormal wear or bite problems.

BEST AGE FOR EXPANSION?

Ideally, a patient should still be growing. Patients who have completed growth may require TADS or surgery in addition to an expander.

MAKE ROOM FOR A HEALTHY SMILE.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

Your orthodontist will provide a small key to turn your expander. Each turn widens the expander very slightly, gradually stretching the growth plate in the roof of your mouth. You may feel pressure against your teeth and behind your nose. Some patients may experience a temporary headache. It can take a few days to get used to. You may notice a temporary increase in the amount of saliva in your mouth and may make slurping sounds until you get used to it.

After a few days or a week, you should begin to notice a space developing between your front teeth. This is a good sign that means the expander is working. This space will close some on its own after you stop your turns and will be fully closed by your braces.

THE PATIENT'S ROLE:

Perform your turns as prescribed. Brush your expander when you brush your teeth. Swish or use a small brush to remove food from above the expander. If you have a removable expander, brush and rinse it each time it is removed.

Orthodontists receive an additional two-to-three years of specialized education beyond dental school to learn the proper way to align teeth and correct bites. Only those who successfully complete this formal education may call themselves orthodontists, and only orthodontists can be members of the American Association of Orthodontists. Learn more: aaoinfo.org.