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EXPANDER INSTRUCTIONS

An orthodontic expander is a specialized appliance used to widen a jaw or to correct a crossbite. Expansion of the jaws is most effective when done prior to the age of 13.

TYPES OF EXPANDERS:

Schwartz

This is a removable expander made of plastic and it is similar in appearance to a retainer. A Schwartz expander can be used in either the upper or lower arch. Small wires or clasps help retain the appliance in the mouth. There is an expansion screw in the middle of the appliance which is activated or turned once or twice a week as instructed. Activation is accomplished by removing the expander from your child's mouth, placing a key into a hole in the expansion screw, and turning it in the direction of the arrow.

Quad-Helix

As indicated by the name of this appliance, a Quad Helix is an expander made of wire consisting of "four loops" and it is shaped like the letter "W". A Quad-Helix is used in the upper arch and it is a cemented appliance. All activations of this appliance are made by our doctors, so there are no keys or screws to turn. It is an adjustable expander, so in addition to widening the upper jaw, the molars can be rotated into alignment. Occasionally, portions of the wire may irritate the gums near the roof of the mouth. Please monitor the Quad Helix in your child's mouth.

Hyrax or Haas

This is a cemented upper expander which is composed of metal wires, acrylic (Haas only) and an expansion screw. The activation of the expansion screw varies from once a day to three times a week depending on the patient's needs. The activations usually are done by the parent who places a key in the expansion screw and turns the screw in the direction of the arrow. The easiest way to assist in activating the expander is to recline your child and have him or her tip their head back.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

When an expander is activated, the patient will feel lateral pressure. The pressure will subside within a few minutes. Occasionally with Haas and Hyrax expanders, a space may open between the upper front teeth. This space can become several millimeters large in some patients. It is important to note that this space is only temporary and it will quickly close after expansion is stopped. Activations of the expansion screw usually require between a month to six months depending on the amount and rate of expansion needed. Once the expansion is complete, the expander remains in place an additional four to six months to help stabilize the changes to the teeth and jaw. It is very important to keep the expander as clean as possible and to clean the gums and teeth adjacent to the expander. A toothbrush can be used on a Schwartz expander while a water-pik, proxibrush and vigorous swishing can supplement a toothbrush on the fixed expanders. If you have any questions or a problem arises, please call our office.

THANK YOU!