

# Palatal Expander Instructions

Your child has been fitted with a special orthodontic appliance called a “palatal expander,” which is designed to gently expand, or widen, their upper arch by stretching the center palatal connective suture. Gentle pressure is applied to the upper molars each time an adjustment to the expander is made, and slowly but surely, the desired expansion is achieved over time.

Once the palate has been widened to the appropriate distance, the suture will naturally become knitted together with newly formed bone.

## Instructions for Adjusting the Palatal Expander:

1. In a well-lit area, have the patient recline with the back of their head resting comfortably on the edge of a bed or arm of a sofa.
2. Have the patient open their mouth as wide as possible, which will minimize the gag reflex.
3. Place the key into the center of the hole in the expander until it's firmly in place, then gently but steadily turn it in the direction indicated by the arrows on the expander - from the front of the mouth to the back.
4. Turn the key just until the next hole becomes visible at the front.
5. To remove the key, gently slide it in a back-and-downward direction, toward the tongue, being very careful not to 'un-turn' the expander in the process.

## Important Notes and Cautions:

- Consume only soft foods for the first few days after receiving the expander.
- If a seed or other small food particle is blocking the keyhole, carefully remove it with a toothpick prior to inserting the key.
- Follow Dr. Wong's specific instructions with regard to the frequency with which the expander should be turned.
- Do your best to adjust the expander at approximately the same time each day.
- Avoid consumption of any hard and/or sticky foods such as caramels, bubble gum, crisp vegetables, or hard candy, all of which have the potential to dislodge, bend or loosen the appliance. Popcorn should also be avoided, as it is known to get lodged beneath the expander, causing gum infections.
- Clean the expander by brushing in and around it thoroughly with your toothbrush after meals, particularly next to the gums, to keep it free of food and plaque. Using a WaterPik to clean in and around your expander can also be very helpful in dislodging food particles.

- *Do not skip a day of turning the expander. Missing an adjustment may lengthen the time required for expansion.*
- *If for some reason you do miss an adjustment, it is very important that you DO NOT turn the appliance two turns the following day in an effort to 'catch up'. Instead, simply resume turning it as instructed above each time.*
- *If you are unable to keep a scheduled appointment with Dr. Wong, do not continue to turn the appliance until you have contacted the office and received new instructions.*

### **Normal and Expected Possible Effects:**

*All the symptoms listed below fall within the range of normal and expected effects of being fitted with a palatal expander. Such effects are typically short lived, and should not be considered reasons for premature removal of the expander.*

- Although it should not be painful, a sensation of pressure, tenderness and/or tingling in the teeth, palate or nose may be noticed when the expander is adjusted. (Use mild over the counter pain relievers such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen as needed if discomfort occurs.)
- Temporary lisp and/or slurred speech
- Temporary excess saliva production (Closing the lips and swallowing before speaking is helpful.)
- Temporary tongue irritation
- Temporary difficulty in chewing and/or swallowing
- Temporary space between two upper front teeth (This space will naturally close once the expander is no longer adjusted.)
- Mild headache
- The bite may feel slightly 'off'
- A slight change in facial appearance may be noticed