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Instructions for Palatal Spreading Device (RPE)

There are certain types of orthodontic problems that are caused by the lack of enough bone growth in the upper jaw to accommodate the upper permanent teeth. In other cases there is room for the upper teeth but the palate, or roof of the mouth, is so narrow that speech and breathing is impaired or made difficult. In other people, the palate is so high that it actually cuts down on the amount of air that can pass through the nose, so that deep breathing through the nose is almost impossible. These patients are called mouth breathers. In all of these cases, a palatal spreading device may be helpful.

This all sounds pretty intense but it actually isn't if the person is still young. Before age 12 (and possibly even after) the maxilla or upper jaw is joined in the center by a suture (space) which allows it to be painlessly separated and spread (Palatal Spreading Device or RPE). Once this has occurred, the two halves of the upper jaw knit back together as new bone is laid down to make the upper jaw wider.

That's how your RPE works. It normally won't create discomfort. Occasionally, a person may feel pressure and be a bit uncomfortable for a day or two or one may feel an "itching" in the roof of your mouth. Don't worry, this is normal.

INSTRUCTIONS - The key is inserted into the hole and then pushed towards the back of the throat until it stops. This will expose the next hole completely. This constitutes one quarter turn or one activation. Be sure not to reverse the activation when removing the key from the mouth. If unsure about these instructions, please just delay the activation and consult with Dr. Adams or one of his staff members.

The key will be turned one quarter turn, one time per day, for the number of days prescribed by Dr. Adams. Progress will be monitored during 2 to 8 week check appointments. **If for any reason you miss the next check appointment, stop turning the device after the prescribed number of turns have been completed.** It is very important to follow the instructions exactly as overexpansion can be detrimental. When in doubt just stop turning, please consult with Dr. Adams at your next appointment. You may notice a space forming between the upper front teeth. This is normal and the space will close gradually over time.

After the palate has been widened enough, it is necessary to hold the expansion for about six months to allow new bone to fill in the space created between the two halves of the upper jaw by the expander. The expander can occasionally be removed earlier if it is bothersome. Dr. Adams will help guide this decision.

A Water Pik device can be a useful adjunct to help keep the expansion appliance clean and clear food out from between the appliance and the roof of the mouth. We do normally stock these devices for your convenience or they can be purchased at any major drug store.

This is a wonderful appliance that can decrease the need for extraction of teeth and can make breathing and speech easier in addition to getting correct balance in width between the upper and lower jaw.

Thank you!

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