

Expander (RPE) Guide

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Expander Basics

Your Rapid Palatal Expander (RPE) works behind the scenes to gently widen your upper jaw. By creating space and improving how your bite fits together, it helps set you up for a healthier, more confident smile.

HOW YOUR RPE WORKS

Your RPE is a custom appliance that fits along the roof of your mouth and gradually opens the suture in the center of your palate.

As it works, it helps to:

- Improve how your top and bottom teeth fit together
- Correct crossbites
- Create space for crowded teeth

Expander Basics

WHAT TO EXPECT

- **Mild pressure** – You may feel pressure in your teeth, cheeks, or nose when the RPE is activated. It usually lasts just a few minutes and can be managed with Tylenol or Advil if needed.
- **A gap between front teeth** – Don't worry if you see a gap forming. It's a normal sign the RPE is working, and the space will close naturally after treatment.
- **Speech & swallowing changes** – Talking may sound different and swallowing might feel awkward at first. These changes are temporary and improve as you adjust.

Caring for Your Expander

RPE CARE

- **Brush thoroughly** – Pay special attention to the bands and metal parts around the expander every day.
- **Use extra tools** – A water flosser or proxy brush helps remove trapped food.
- **Avoid certain foods** – Sticky (caramel, taffy, gummy candy) and hard/crunchy foods (popcorn, nuts, ice, sour candy) can loosen or damage your expander.

TURNING THE KEY

You'll be given a small key to activate the expander at home. Follow these steps:

1. Insert the key into the hole in the center front of the expander.
2. Push the key backward gently until the next hole appears.
3. Remove the key straight down toward the tongue (don't reverse the turn).
4. Repeat as instructed by your orthodontist.

Expander FAQs

What if I feel pressure when I turn the key?

That's normal and means the expander is working. The feeling should go away in a few minutes.

What if a gap appears between my front teeth?

It's a sign of progress! The gap will close on its own once expansion is complete.

What if food gets stuck around my expander?

Use a water flosser or proxy brush to clean around the metal parts and roof of your mouth.

What if I'm not sure how to turn the key?

Call us and we'll walk you through it, or come in for a quick refresher.

NEED MORE HELP?

We're just a call or text away at
(864) 801-3500.

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