



Children's Hospital Boston

Department of Dentistry

Children's Hospital, Boston

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**HARVARD SCHOOL
OF DENTAL MEDICINE**

Division of Pediatric Dentistry

Department of Oral and Developmental Biology

Palate Widening Appliance

The palate widening appliance is an orthodontic appliance used to expand the width of the upper jaw or roof of the mouth and teeth.

Reasons to widen the upper arch:

- By widening the upper arch, the teeth may line up better with the lower teeth, giving a better bite.
- Widening the palate can make more room for crowded teeth.
- By correcting the bite and jaw shift, stress to the temporomandibular joint (jaw joint) may be reduced.
- A narrow upper arch may restrict the breathing passages located above the palate. Widening the palate widens these passages which may lead to better breathing.

What happens as the palate is widened?

The expanding action separates the elastic membrane in the center of the palate. Expansion of the arch is usually completed in 2-4 weeks. However, the appliance remains in place for approximately 3 or more months to allow new bone tissue to fill the space.

Widening the palate temporarily causes a space to open between the two upper front teeth. For some people, the procedure causes some discomfort during the first week. There may be a feeling of pressure or tingling in the roof of the mouth or at the bridge of the nose. Tylenol® or Advil® will effectively relieve the discomfort.

Who activates the appliance?

Once the appliance has been cemented in place, the parent will activate it once every day. To activate the appliance, a key is inserted into the hole or slot in the middle of the appliance. Gently and steadily push the key from the front toward the back of the mouth



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until a stop is reached. Remove the key as far back as possible, a new keyhole automatically moves into the original position and is ready for the next activation.

Parents and Patient Responsibilities:

- Activate the appliance once per day.
- Maintain good oral hygiene by brushing and rinsing several times each day.
- Return to the office if you are experiencing difficulty turning the key. The appliance therapy will not be effective unless the appliance is activated once each day.