

YOUR CHILD'S PALATE WIDENING APPLIANCE

The "quad helix" is a specially designed appliance used to expand the upper jaw or arch. This is generally prescribed to correct a cross-bite in the back of the mouth. It can also be used to relieve mild crowding in the upper jaw.

Expansion of the upper jaw has many **advantages**:

1. The upper teeth are placed into better relationship with the lower teeth. This gives the patient a better bite and allows for more comfortable chewing.
2. It reduces further distortion of the upper and lower jaws. Left uncorrected, permanent facial deformities can occur.
3. Expanding the jaw may also improve the child's breathing by opening up restricted air passages. Nasal breathing often improves.
4. Minor crowding of the upper and lower teeth is often improved by widening the upper jaw.
5. Future orthodontic care (braces), if needed, is less complicated.

At what age should palatal expansion be performed?...as soon as the child can tolerate the procedure. Some children are ready by age three.

What are the advantages to starting at an early age?...The bone is soft and more easily molded in the young child. Early correction allows for the jaws to grow in the proper direction at an earlier age. The cross-bite is less likely to become "set" and cause facial deformity. Early correction is less likely to revert back to the original cross-bite ("relapse").

What is involved in "palatal expansion"?

1. Models, photos, a lateral and a panoramic x-ray of the jaws are taken for study.
2. Orthodontic bands are fit to two upper back molars and a quad helix expander appliance is fit to your child's upper teeth.
3. The appliance is adjusted by us at regular intervals to provide a gentle widening effect to the upper jaw.
4. Home care by the parent and child merely involves keeping the teeth and the appliance clean. Certain sticky foods will have to be avoided until after appliance therapy.
5. Some children may experience mild discomfort for the first few days after appliance insertion. This is easily controlled by Tylenol or Advil. Most children adapt to the appliance quite well.
6. Treatment time generally takes 6 - to - 12 months.