

# Rapid Maxillary Expander (RME)



## What is it?

It is an appliance with a screw that is attached to the teeth on the roof of the mouth. The reason that it is called a “rapid maxillary expander (RME)” is because it expands the roof of the upper jaw (maxilla) in less than 30 days.



## How long will I have it?

The expander will remain in the mouth for a period of around three months.



## How does it work?

The upper jaw is actually two separate pieces with an open suture (crack) down the middle. You will be shown how to turn the screw usually twice a day (one time in the morning and one at night) for about ten days. Some of the expansion comes from having the teeth pushed out to the side but the majority of the expansion comes from pushing the two halves of the jaw away from each other. This makes the jaw wider.



## Will I need surgery?

If you are 16 yrs and older, it is usually impossible to achieve the expansion with the appliance alone. Surgery is carried out under general anaesthetic in the mouth. Cuts are made under the gum on the side of the maxillary bone and the expander is used as normal. This is known as ‘Surgically Assisted Rapid Maxillary Expansion (SARME)’.



## Will it hurt?

During the first few days of expansion, expect some soreness from all of the teeth. The soreness will eventually go away, usually in 3 days or less. The greatest amount of soreness generally comes the morning after the cementation because the teeth have been apart all-night long. We recommend that you do as much chewing as possible, eat soft food and take a painkiller.



## Getting an ulcer

Place Orthodontic wax or soft sugar-free gum over the sharp part and come in for an appointment if the problem persists.



## Why is there space between my teeth?

A space will develop within a few days of wearing the expander. The expander pushes the two

halves of the jaw away from each other and the teeth follow. Do not worry about this because the space will close on its own. It takes about four weeks to fully close.



## What about speech?

Most find that they get used to speaking with the expander within two weeks. If you read your homework aloud you will get used to it very quickly. Remember, you always sound different to yourself than you do to others. You will sound worse to yourself than to others.



## What about eating?

Give yourself a few weeks to adjust and during this time eat all foods in small pieces. This way if you have to swallow it immediately, you can. Stay away from long spaghetti noodles initially along with white bread, which tends to be very sticky. It goes without saying that peanut butter is another food to avoid.

Please keep your TEETH, TONGUE and EXPANDER clean. The expander may leave a groove in your tongue, which should not cause a problem. Should the groove become infected, it will cause a problem. Daily cleaning of your tongue with a toothbrush will help you to avoid an infection. You also need to keep your expander clean since it is in contact with your teeth all day long.

Following the expansion, the expander is removed and the treatment is usually continued with braces.



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