

# Bonded Expander Removal

***What has been happening with the expander?*** You will remember that the expander was “glued” to the teeth after the teeth were cleaned and protected with a special sealant applied by the orthodontist. During the first week after expander placement, there was an “acclimation period” where speaking and eating were initially more difficult. The expander has allowed a widening of the roof of the mouth by way of growth at the mid-palate junction of the two halves of the upper jaw. This orthopedic growth guidance has resulted in extra spacing between the top front teeth. The space between the front teeth has likely already reduced, but it has provided more space for other permanent teeth to erupt in the future. As you know, the expander has been stabilized for the past few months and now it is time to remove it!

***How is the expander removed?*** We have special instruments that allow us to break the seal between the expander and the teeth. There is a “cracking noise” as the seal breaks, and the expander is lifted off of the teeth. There is no need for anesthesia (no “shots”). There is often residual orthodontic cement that must be cleaned off of the teeth at this appointment.

***What happens to the teeth and gums after the expander is removed?*** Upon immediate removal, the gums around the expander are swollen due to the difficulty of cleaning well around the expander itself. Sometimes the gums bleed a little, although it is rare that they are uncomfortable even though they look red and puffy for several days after expander removal. In cases where there are loose baby teeth, they sometimes come out in the expander when it is removed, although this is rare. We recommend gentle brushing of the teeth and gums following expander removal. Rinsing with an astringent mouthwash like Listerine twice a day during the first three to five days after expander removal can also help.

***What is it like after the expander is taken off?*** The first feeling is one of having a big space in the roof of the mouth. The tongue “expects” the expander, and there is nothing there! In addition, it initially feels awkward to bite and bring the teeth together as the surfaces of the back teeth no longer are covered. Some patients may continue to wear the expander as a removable retainer.

***What about eating?*** For the first several days, softer foods are recommended to get used to chewing without the expander in the mouth. Often, “spacers” will be placed between the back teeth in preparation for wrap-around braces on the back molar teeth. If this is the case, then avoid sticky foods like gum, taffy and caramels that can pull the new “spacers” from between the teeth. We will review diet instructions as we now go to our next stage in treatment.

***How do you keep the teeth clean?*** We recommend brushing completely around the teeth at least twice per day, spending at least two minutes at each session. Don’t forget to brush over every part of the braces as well. Patients should have a lighted magnifying mirror (make-up mirror) in the bathroom so that they may check after brushing. If you cannot brush after eating, at least rinse out your mouth with water. As added protection, also rinse before bedtime with a fluoride releasing mouthwash like ACT.

***Any questions?*** Please ask!

**Graber Orthodontics**