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TRANSPALATAL ARCH

Permanent Dentition

A transpalatal arch (TPA) is an orthodontic appliance that extends across the palate with bands on the maxillary first molars. This wire has many purposes. Initially, we will use the TPA to rotate your molars into their proper positions. This is accomplished by activating one side of the appliance at the time of the initial delivery and the other side approximately six weeks later. Occasionally, it takes us more than two activations to align your molars properly. This arch will probably remain in place throughout the duration of your orthodontic treatment.

A second role of the transpalatal arch is to act as an anchor unit in the posterior part of the mouth. After the molars have been properly positioned, they will be held in place by the TPA. We then can carry out other orthodontic movements (for example, elimination of rotations and closure of extraction spaces). By having a transpalatal arch in place, the need for headgear is greatly reduced or eliminated.

Although the TPA is usually tolerated quite well, you may encounter some initial discomfort with the appliance, as well as some initial interruption of speech patterns. You may experience some tenderness in the area of your tongue next to the appliance, and even see the imprint of the appliance on the tongue. The teeth themselves may also become tender and a bit loose. If the cheek adjacent to the appliance becomes irritated, the application of wax on the appliance is very helpful. If these symptoms do not resolve themselves within three to five days, or seem to be worsening after that time, you should contact the office.

Many patients report food being trapped under the transpalatal arch. A "swish and swallow" procedure using water is quite effective in dislodging trapped food. **You should never try to suck food off the transpalatal arch because food particles could then be sucked into your lungs.**

If you experience any undue pain or discomfort with the appliance, the appliance becomes loose, or if you feel that it is becoming embedded in your palate, please call the office immediately.

