

TECHNIQUE CLINIC

Chairside Repair of a Fan-Shaped Rapid Palatal Expander

Fan-shaped rapid palatal expanders are often placed in cases where the arch is more constricted in the anterior segments, and therefore more expansion is needed anteriorly than posteriorly. They are particularly useful in cleft lip/cleft palate patients, who typically have constricted anterior palates.

If the RPE screw becomes loose, however, it can be impossible to replace while the appliance is in the mouth. The appliance has to be removed, and if the screw is lost (A), a new RPE must be fabricated. This requires a new impression and a temporary retainer.

A way to avoid this inconvenience is to fabricate a simple expansion device while the patient is in the chair. An .045" stainless steel wire is bent into a helix coil in the middle, and hooks are formed at each end for attachment to the RPE (B). The wire is secured to the RPE with .010" ligature wires, with the helix taking the place of the screw (C). This device can either maintain the expansion already achieved or help expand the arch further.



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