

Space Maintainers

Occasionally a child may lose a primary (baby) tooth prematurely due to trauma or disease. When this happens, Dr. Drum may recommend that a space maintainer be placed in the area of the missing tooth. This prevents the loss of space and possible dental problems in the future. If the space is not maintained, the teeth around that space may tilt or drift into the space. This creates less space for the permanent (adult) tooth to erupt and causing crowding. The opposing tooth might also erupt further (move up or down) to fill in the gap. If left untreated, extensive orthodontics may be necessary.

Space maintainers are metal or plastic appliances specifically fit for your child's mouth. Most children adjust to them within a few days of placement. They are designed to fill the space until the permanent tooth starts to erupt.

If the space maintainer becomes loose, be sure to schedule an appointment to have it repaired. When it becomes loose, bacteria (germs) can get between the appliance and the tooth and cause carious lesions (cavities). It is important to take care of this problem quickly to maintain the health of the tooth.

To care for the maintainer, avoid sticky sweets or chewing gum. Also remind your child to leave it alone—don't push or pull it with a finger or tongue. Be sure to keep it clean with proper brushing and flossing. Lastly, be sure to maintain regular dental visits.

Reference: <http://www.aapd.org/publications/brochures/space.asp>