

PEDIATRIC SERIES

SpaceMaintainers

Why are baby teeth important?

Normally, as a permanent tooth comes in under a baby tooth, the roots of the baby tooth dissolve away, and the permanent tooth replaces the baby tooth. In addition to being important for chewing, the baby tooth holds the adjacent teeth in place. When a baby tooth is lost early, due to decay or injury, the adjacent teeth may drift together, causing loss of space in the dental arch.



Teeth can shift



A space maintainer



Teeth stay straight

Placing a space maintainer

When a baby tooth is lost early, this shifting and loss of arch space can be prevented by placing a space maintainer. It generally takes two appointments to complete a space maintainer. During the first appointment, an orthodontic band is carefully placed and an impression is taken. A model of the child's mouth is made from this impression so that the dental laboratory can form the space maintainer to the exact contours of the mouth. During the next appointment, the space maintainer is tried in, adjusted if necessary, and then cemented in place.

Caring for the space maintainer

Space maintainers are used until the permanent teeth begin to break through the gums. While wearing a space maintainer, it is important to avoid chewing gum, sticky candies, and hard foods like Cornnuts or ice. Following up with periodic checks of the space maintainer here in our office will make sure it's still functioning properly and keeping all the teeth in their proper position.