

## SPACE MAINTAINANCE

If a baby tooth is lost prematurely, you may need a space maintainer to "save" the space. What does that mean? Baby teeth are there for a reason. One key reason is that they save space for the permanent tooth, which will erupt into its position when the baby tooth is lost normally.

If a primary tooth (baby tooth) has to be removed early due to an abscess, extensive decay or is knocked out in some kind of trauma, a space maintainer may be recommended to save the space. If the space is not preserved, the other teeth may drift causing difficult to treat crowding and orthodontic problems. If it is a front tooth then you don't need a space maintainer.

However, you can place a pediatric partial to replace the teeth for cosmetic reasons.

Spacers" may be in there for a while, but they are not permanent. They are removed when the new tooth erupts or the abutment teeth get loose.



Early Loss of Baby Tooth  
Leads to Dental Crowding

### TYPES OF SPACE MAINTAINERS

**Bilateral:** Bilateral space maintainers are usually cemented with bands on back teeth on both sides of the mouth. The bands are connected by a wire just behind the lower incisors. This can eliminate the need for two unilateral spacers. They are most useful if there is more than one tooth missing or you are trying to keep the lower incisors from tipping. A maxillary bilateral spacer may incorporate an acrylic button and is called a Nance space maintainer.



**Unilateral:** Unilateral space maintainers are usually "replacing" one tooth. They may be a band and loop type but occasionally a distal shoe type may be used when the permanent first molar has not yet erupted.

