

BRUXISM WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Bruxism: is excessive clenching or grinding of the teeth that is not a part of normal chewing movements. It can lead to excessive wear on the teeth and may cause permanent damage to the teeth and the jaw joints.

Causes: the causes of bruxism are still being studied. A combination of physical and psychological factors are believed to contribute to bruxism:

- physical stress such as illness, nutritional deficiencies or dehydration, particularly in children
- psychological stress, anxiety and tension in adults and children
- studies have shown the night bruxism is a sleep disorder
- other abnormal anatomy of the teeth or jaw ("high spots" on fillings) can cause an improper occlusion ("bite") and lead to bruxing behavior.

Signs & Symptoms: the sign and symptoms of bruxism vary according to the nature, frequency, duration and strength of excessive clenching and grinding. Signs and symptoms may include:

- pain in the teeth and sensitivity to heat and cold
- chronic facial pain with tension headaches, caused by intense muscle contraction
- the noise, noticed by partners, friends or relatives, that occurs as the teeth are ground together
- flattened and worn teeth surfaces, which may reveal the underlying yellow dentine layer
- micro-fractures of the teeth enamel
- broken or chipped teeth
- loose teeth with possible damage to the tooth sockets
- stiffness and pain in the jaw joint muscles; this can cause restricted opening and difficult chewing. Sometimes the temporomandibular joint (TMJ or jaw joint) may suffer damage that is slow to heal.
- earache or pain in the jaw joint.

The variation in signs and symptoms reflects the strength of the clenching and grinding involved in bruxism.

People who clench their teeth tightly may experience tension related headaches, but may have little or no damage to the teeth or jaw joint.

Those who experience severe grinding may have damaged teeth and jaw joint problems.

People with mild tooth grinding may have worn tooth surfaces but no jaw joint pain or tooth sensitivity.

Diagnosis: Accurate diagnosis is important to ensure the correct treatment.

- the location of the pain, stiffness or soreness
- range of jaw movement
- any noises in the jaw joint
- your bite, tooth wear and movement of teeth

Treatment: An occlusal splint (also called a night guard) can be made for mild to severe grinding behavior. Worn at night, (in some cases during the day as well) the splint is made from moulded hard and soft plastic that fits over the upper or lower teeth. It prevents further wear of the tooth surfaces.

Treatment may be necessary to repair damaged teeth. Dental fillings, crowns or inlays can replace severely damaged tooth surfaces. Root canal treatment may be required where tooth fractures extend into the pulp. In extreme cases, extraction of badly damaged teeth may be the only option.

Partial dentures, dental bridges or dental implants can replace missing teeth. In some cases orthodontic treatment may help stop the grinding.

We may also suggest physiotherapy on the jaw joint.

We may prescribe painkillers for muscular facial pain, headaches and jaw joint pain, also muscle relaxant medication to help relax the jaw muscles.

If you have any of these problems please contact us.

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