

## **What is Bruxism (AKA Grinding and Clenching) and do I do it?**

“Bruxism” refers to tooth grinding and tooth clenching that many children and adults experience throughout their lifetime. Bruxism occurs when the teeth contact each other in a forceful way; this can be silent or cause a loud sound notably when sleeping. For many people, bruxism is an unconscious habit but can have devastating effects that can eventually destroy the surrounding bone and gum tissues in the mouth. Other potential signs of bruxing include aching in the face, head and neck.



### **Why does this happen?**

Many medical and dental professionals may not always know the exact cause but bruxism can occur due to psychological stress that people may be dealing with during the week. Stress can be categorized in two ways, internal and external factors.

Internal factors could be the foods you consume, your level of fitness, your emotional stability, overall health and well-being, and the amount of sleep you get each evening. External factors of psychological stress include the environment you are in each day, interactions with others, when you are at home how you deal with challenges on a daily basis.

Bruxism also can be a side effect of some psychiatric medications, including antidepressant medications, including fluoxetine (Prozac), sertraline (Zoloft) and paroxetine (Paxil).

### What are the symptoms?

- Rhythmic contractions of the jaw muscles
- A grinding sound at night, which may disturb the sleep of someone who shares a bedroom with a “bruxer”
- A dull morning headache
- Jaw muscles that are tight or painful, especially in the morning
- Chronic facial pain
- Damaged teeth, fractured dental fillings, bridgework or implants and injured gums
- Wearing away the tooth enamel and possibly the dentin
- Tooth sensitivity
- Pain in the temporomandibular joint (jaw bone on either side of the mouth)



## How do you treat Bruxing?



The appropriate treatment for you will depend on what is causing the problem. Depending on the amount of tooth damage and its likely cause, your dentist may suggest:

- Wearing an appliance while sleeping (AKA night guard)-Custom made by your dentist to fit your teeth, the appliance slips over the upper teeth and protects them from grinding against the lower teeth. While an appliance is a good way to manage bruxism, it is not a cure.
- Finding ways to relax-Because everyday stress seems to be a major cause of bruxism, anything that reduces stress can help. Ex: listening to music, reading a book, taking a walk or a bath. It may help to seek counselling to learn effective ways for handling stressful situations.
- Reducing the “high spots” of one or more teeth to even your bite. An abnormal bite, one in which teeth do not fit well together, may also be corrected with new fillings or orthodontics.
- Brain injury or neuromuscular illness. Your bruxism may be especially hard to treat if you have these medical problems. Your oral surgeon may give you injections of botulinum toxin if more conservative treatments fail.
- Medication-If you develop bruxism as a side effect of antidepressant medications, your doctor either can switch you to a different drug or give you another medication to counteract your bruxism.

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