

TOOTH GRINDING

Bruxism is an oral habit that involves clenching and/or grinding of the teeth. It is not uncommon in our society.

Approximately 50-90% of adults experience bruxism at some stage of their lives and 15% of children also acquire this behaviour. Often this behaviour goes unnoticed by the person as they brux during the night-time sleep or are unaware of their daytime habit.

Bruxism has no single specific cause but is thought to be multifactorial-caused by a number of various factors such as:

Emotional stress - tough times at work/ home/ exams.

Physicality stress - illness

Personal type - aggressive, controlling, precise or who have time urgency and achievement compulsion tend to be more likely to develop bruxism.

Malocclusion - teeth that are not aligned optimally.

Hereditary - children whose parents brux are more likely to develop this habit than children whose parents do not brux.

Underlying skeletal malalignment - compressing of nerves existing from the cervical skeleton.

There are many signs and symptoms of bruxism. Some patients present to the dental surgery unaware of their habit whilst others require immediate relief.

- A dentist may have examined your dentition detecting signs such as tooth wear, fracturing of the teeth and fillings and “abfraction lesions” (due to flexing of the teeth).
- A sleeping partner notices grinding noises.
- You may suffer from related:
 - facial pain and fatigue
 - locking, popping or clicking of the TMJ (temporomandibular joint)
 - headaches
 - neck/back ache
 - tooth mobility
 - sensitive teeth

The treatment of bruxism involves the effect this habit has on the body. Some people will stop grinding and clenching all together whilst others will continue to brux without feeling its effects.

- Becoming aware of this habit, bringing it to the conscious level of thought, is the first step on the process. If you become aware at any time of the day or night STOP!
- Stress reduction and coping techniques can be initiated to reduce the emotional stress you may be experiencing.
- A series of “deprogramming exercises” is available which aim to deprogram the nerves from stimulating the muscles to grind.
- A removable intra-oral appliance can be manufactured for you. The splint protects the teeth from the forces of clenching and grinding the teeth together.

If you think you may be experiencing this oral problem, please consult your dentist.