

BRUXISM (TOOTH GRINDING)



Bruxism or tooth grinding

Bruxism is the excessive grinding or clenching of the teeth. It can lead to disproportionate wear of the teeth. This damage is permanent.

Bruxism can also lead to temporomandibular jaw (TMJ) or facial muscle problems. These are known as temporomandibular dysfunction (TMD).

You have been given this pamphlet because you have been assessed as showing clinical signs of bruxism.

Problems associated with bruxism

Bruxism places huge forces, and associated stresses, on the muscles, joints, teeth and dental work. This repeated stress cycling of the teeth can have numerous and severe consequences such as:

- Loss of tooth structure resulting in 'shorter' teeth with associated loss of occlusal face height and loss of support for facial tissues
- Stress fractures in otherwise sound teeth. This can lead to chipping or fracturing of teeth or temperature sensitivity.
- Serious fractures of teeth (usually teeth that already have fillings) that can lead to the need for crowns or even root canal work.
- Abrasive lesions where the tooth meets the gum which can lead to sensitivity, poor aesthetics and tooth fracture.
- Fillings, and even crown and bridgework, will have a greatly reduced life expectancy in non-managed bruxers.

Management of wear

The best option for prevention of Attrition is Occlusal Appliance therapy. StKildadentist uses the very latest in occlusal splint technology. The outer part of the splint is a tough acrylic resin that will take even the most aggressive grinders a few years to wear through! The inner part of the splint is a soft thermoplastic resin which moulds to the teeth to provide a comfortable, secure fit.

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A splint works in 2 basic ways:

Wearing the splint re-positions the musculature subtly and this is sometimes enough to 'break the cycle' and actually prevent grinding from occurring. Some people, who don't grind all the time but go through phases, can sometimes just start wearing the splint when they are in a grinding phase and it may help break them back out of the cycle.

For those people who are relentless grinders the splint acts simply as protection. The major problems caused by bruxism are a result of the repeated stress cycling of the teeth by the grinding. Every time the splint is worn it extends the life of the teeth and associated dental work by reducing the stress cycling experienced by the teeth.

What's involved?

An 15 minute appointment is needed to take upper and lower impressions of the teeth. The splint is constructed by the laboratory and fitted about 1-2 weeks later in another 30 minute appointment.

Further appointments may be needed for adjustments.

Even one fractured large filling can cost several hundred dollars to replace; crowns and endodontic work can cost thousands of dollars, and a full mouth rehabilitation can cost tens of thousands of dollars. So an occlusal splint (which can dramatically help reduce the likelihood of this work being needed in bruxers) can therefore be seen as a sound financial, as well as clinical, investment.

