

Do You Grind Your Teeth?

How to Treat and Prevent Bruxism

Bruxism is a habit of grinding or clenching the teeth. Clenching means you tightly hold your top and bottom teeth together. Grinding is when you slide your teeth back and forth over each other. Bruxism can happen at any age, to children or adults.

Many people with bruxism wake themselves up in the middle of the night with a loud clenching or grinding sound. Sometimes the sound is so loud that parents or sleep partners can hear it. For other people, bruxism may be silent.

People who suffer from bruxism may have the following symptoms:

- headache
- sore jaw
- frequent toothaches
- facial pain
- worn or cracked teeth or fillings
- loose teeth
- earache
- insomnia

What causes bruxism?

The causes of bruxism are not known for certain. Stress, sleep disorders and an abnormal bite are some of the things that may play a role.

Your dentist can diagnose bruxism by looking for unusual wear spots on your teeth and assessing related symptoms. Regular dental checkups are important to find damage in the early stages. Your dentist can help you manage bruxism and the related symptoms, as well as repair and help to prevent further damage to your teeth.



Teeth worn by bruxism



Custom-made night guards protect teeth from wear.

How is bruxism treated?

Bruxism treatment depends on each individual's situation. Your dentist may recommend one or more treatments for you, such as:

- stress reduction
- a protective "night guard" worn over the teeth while sleeping
- medication for pain or muscle spasms
- fillings or other dental treatment to repair damaged teeth

Your dentist may suggest wearing a night guard while you sleep. Night guards are custom-made by your dentist from plastic or acrylic. The night guard slips over either the upper or lower teeth and prevents the teeth from touching. It protects teeth and helps keep them from wearing down.

You can help manage bruxism by paying attention to the symptoms, having frequent dental visits and talking with your dentist.

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