

BRUXISM (Teeth Grinding/Clenching)

Bruxism is involuntary clenching and or grinding of the teeth. About half of the population bruxes occasionally, while around five per cent are habitual and forceful bruxers. It generally happens during sleep, but it may also occur while you are awake.

Bruxism can be a physical expression of stress; for example, people may tend to grind their teeth when they are angry, concentrating hard on a particular task or feeling anxious.

Generally, bruxism is usually subconscious, and often silent. The muscles involved are strong, and bruxism can be forceful enough to cause damage in as little as ten minutes.

Symptoms of bruxism

- worn, cracked or chipped teeth
- tooth indentations on the tongue
- raised tissue inside cheeks
- headache, jaw joint and/or ear pain
- clenching when angry, anxious, concentrating
- aching/stiffness of the face and temples
- aching or stiffness while chewing
- temperature-sensitive teeth
- aching teeth, particularly upon waking
- mobile (wobbly) teeth
- audible sounds during sleep (sometimes)

Complications of bruxism

- excessive wear and tear on the teeth
- broken teeth or restorations
- cracked tooth enamel
- accelerated gum disease
- strain on the joints and soft tissue of the jaw joint (TMJ)
- temporo-mandibular disorder
- enlargement of the jaw muscles

Causes of bruxism

- emotional stress such as anger or anxiety
- mental concentration or physical effort
- illness, nutritional deficiency or dehydration
- incorrect tooth alignment
- drug misuse (particularly amphetamines)
- eruption of teeth (babies and children)

Dental treatment for bruxism

- repair of tooth damage
- adjustment of fillings that may be too high and interfering with the bite
- realignment of crooked teeth with braces or Invisalign
- mouth appliances worn at night so that you grind the appliance rather than your teeth. In most cases, these appliances will only provide relief from the associated symptoms and will not stop bruxism.

Other treatments for teeth-grinding/clenching

- stress management and relaxation
- physiotherapy or massage therapy
- moist heat compresses to ease discomfort
- muscle relaxant meds (ex: Robaxacet)
- pain relievers and anti-inflammatories (ex: Advil or Naproxen)

Please call to visit or speak with Dr. Tuckwood if you have any questions about bruxism.