



Bruxism

What is bruxism?

Bruxism is the technical term for teeth clenching and grinding, which may cause jaw and facial pain. People who grind and clench their teeth are called “bruxers”. Bruxers unintentionally bite down on their teeth at inappropriate times, such as when they are undergoing stress or when they are sleeping. In the long term, this can cause jaw pain and wear on the surfaces of your teeth. About one in three people suffer from bruxism but it often goes unnoticed until it is too late.

What are the signs?

When a person has bruxism, the tips of the teeth often look flat and can have exposed dentin, which is the inner part of the tooth, due to the enamel of the teeth being worn down. Having exposed dentin can lead to sensitivity. Someone with bruxism may also experience soreness or pain in their temporomandibular junction or TMJ, which may manifest as clicking or popping in the jaw. The grinding and clenching may also cause headaches. Your dentist will check for signs for bruxism during your regular dental exams.

What can be done?

There are several ways to relieve some of the symptoms of bruxism, depending on when you are grinding or clenching your teeth and what symptoms you are experiencing.

One solution your dentist may suggest is a **nightguard**, a custom-made, clear laminate or acrylic mold of your teeth to wear on your upper or lower teeth as you sleep. This will protect your teeth from some of the damaging effects of bruxism such as worn enamel or cracked teeth.

Your dentist may also suggest home remedies such as warm compresses on your jaw and jaw exercises to alleviate the tenseness and headaches caused by bruxism.

If you are experiencing soreness in your jaw or have noticed yourself grinding or clenching your teeth, be sure to mention it at your next dental appointment so your dentist can suggest ways to protect your teeth from damage and wear!