



Dental Grinding: Bruxism

Most people are not aware that they are clenching or grinding their teeth because it occurs when they are asleep.

Although this problem may start early in childhood, there may not be any bothersome symptoms until suddenly as an adult. Over time there can be injury to the temporomandibular joint (TMJ). Women are more prone to TMJ problems than men.

Symptoms

- Headaches, usually in temple – sometimes dull, but also sharp, intense pain
- Ear ache
- Neck pain (pain can be mistaken for an ear, sinus or dental infection)
- Popping or crunching near ear when chewing
- Locking of jaw, making it difficult to open mouth

Causes

- Stress
- Misaligned bite
- antidepressants

Complications

- Dental wear and breaking
- Inflammation of chewing muscles
- Damage to the temporomandibular joint (TMJ)

Treatment

- Night mouth guard. There are smaller oral devices that can be worn during the day. (link to product section) – customized mouth guards are usually the most comfortable and effective, but cost \$300-2500. They are available from a dentist.
- Motrin (ibuprofen), Aleve or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents
- Local heat, as often as reasonable
- Soft diet (avoid chewing gum and candies, meats, bagels and other similarly textured foods)
- Muscle relaxants
- Magnesium citrate 250-400 mg daily