

## Bruxism

Sleep related Bruxism involves the grinding or clenching of teeth during sleep. It is common for the jaw to contract while you sleep. When these contractions are too strong, they are referred to as tooth grinding. This can cause dental damage by wearing the teeth down. In most severe cases, hundreds of events can occur during the night. In milder cases, the grinding may vary from night to night.

Severe Bruxism may briefly disturb your sleep. Only at rare times will it cause you to fully wake up. Loud sounds caused by the grinding of teeth can be very unpleasant. This can also disturb the sleep of a bed partner. It can occur during all stages of sleep. It is most common in stages one and two of Non-Rapid Eye Movement Sleep.

The following are signs of bruxism:

- Tooth pain
- Jaw muscle pain
- Mouth and facial pain
- Limited jaw movement
- Damaged or worn teeth
- Sore gums
- Headaches

You may not know that you have it unless a family member or bed partner hears the noise. The rate of Bruxism seems to be highest in children. About 14% to 17% of children suffer from it. It can begin as soon as a child's upper and lower teeth have come through the gums. Around one third of children with bruxism will still have it when they are adults. The rate of Bruxism decreases with age.

Some people may experience Bruxism every night for most of their lives. Dentures may dampen the sound of grinding. This can keep Bruxism from being detected. It seems to affect men and women at an equal rate, and appears to occur in families.

It is also important to know if there is something else that is causing your sleep problems. Cause may be a result of one of the following:

Another sleep disorder

A medical condition

Medication use

A mental health disorder

Substance abuse

You should not be alarmed if you only grind your teeth from time to time. But regular tooth grinding can cause damage. Talk with a family doctor about your problem. Your doctor can help you find ways to deal with the stress that may be causing Bruxism.

Keep a sleep diary for two weeks. The sleep diary will help the doctor see your sleeping patterns. This information gives the doctor clues about what is causing your problem and how to correct it.

Your doctor may refer you to a Sleep Consultant or Dentist qualified in Dental Sleep Medicine. You may require an overnight sleep study (Polysomnogram). The Polysomnogram charts your brain waves, heartbeat, and breathing as you sleep. It also records how your arms and legs move. This will show if there are other disorders, such as Sleep Apnoea, Restless Legs Syndrome or Periodic Limb Movement Disorder, that are causing your sleep problems. You may also be videoed while sleeping. This will help show if you grind your teeth or do anything unusual during the study.

An oral appliance (similar in shape to a gum shield) can be used to protect your teeth while you sleep. A Dentist usually fits this type of device.

*DISCLAIMER: While every effort is made to ensure medical accuracy, this paper should not be used to diagnose or treat a sleep disorder. In all cases the advice of a properly qualified medical practitioner should be sought.*

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