

Worn Down Teeth

Severe Bruxism

For some people, sleep is neither rejuvenating nor refreshing but the cause of headaches, facial muscle soreness, neck and shoulder pain, all of which may be attributed to bruxism.

Bruxism is the subconscious clenching and grinding of teeth, this mostly occurs during sleep and times of stress, with many sufferers unaware of their condition until it is diagnosed during their dental check-up or alerted to by a partner. Bruxism can result in severe damage to your teeth, which may require restorative procedures if not detected and treated in its early stage.

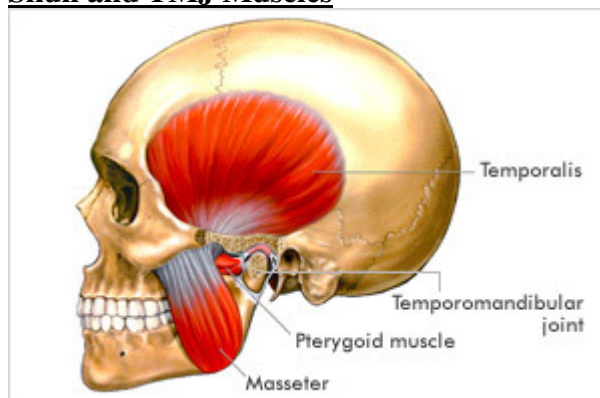
There can be various influencing factors that cause bruxism and may be physiological or psychological. High stress levels, anxiety, nervous tension and suppressed anger or frustration can contribute to you clenching and grinding your teeth as can repetitive strenuous physical activity, where as jaw misalignment may be either a cause or a symptom of bruxism.

When you are asleep, your biting force (the force at which the upper and lower jaws clench together) can be up to six times greater than when you are awake, so much more damage to your teeth can be done during this time including the dislodging of fillings, cracking or chipping of your tooth enamel.

Signs and symptoms of bruxism may include:

- Teeth grinding or clenching loud enough to wake your sleep partner
- Teeth that have worn down, become flattened, chipped or cracked
- Worn tooth enamel exposing the underlying dentine of your tooth
- Increased tooth sensitivity to hot and cold
- Jaw pain or tightness in your jaw muscles
- Earache not caused by an infection
- A dull morning headache
- Facial pain
- Indication of biting on the inside of your cheek
- Loose teeth which may eventually fall out

Skull and TMJ Muscles



There are various treatment alternatives available depending upon your personal needs. If your bruxism is caused as a result of stress or anxiety, implementing relaxation techniques on how to rest your tongue, jaw and lips correctly may help relieve discomfort in your jaw joint and muscles whilst your mouth is closed.

Other factors that contribute to premature "wear" of teeth include excessive intake of acids in either drinks or food. Of course, as we age teeth tend to get more worn and chipped.

Worn teeth can create that 'chin close to nose' look associated with the very elderly. Also cheek tissue folds over, cracks may appear in the corners of the lips and the face falls in, all leading to a prematurely old appearance. Over time tooth nerves can be exposed and this may cause severe pain.

A "bruxism or night" guard custom-made by your dentist can absorb the biting force while you are sleeping and prevent further damage to your tooth enamel, gums and soft tissue during sleep. It also moves your teeth and jaw to their correct position so your muscles can relax. On very rare occasions muscle relaxant medication may be prescribed.

Bruxism can be cyclical and recur during times of stress, knowing the signs can help limit any impact on your oral and general health caused as a result of bruxism.

If you have been suffering from bruxism for some time before it is diagnosed, you may require restorative treatment to worn teeth, fractured teeth, fillings, crowns or bridges. Following a thorough examination, your dentist can advise if any restorative treatment is needed.