

The habit of grinding your teeth or clenching your jaw is called **bruxism (BRUCKS-is-im)**.

Grinding is when you slide your teeth back and forth over each other. Clenching means you tightly hold your top and bottom teeth together. Bruxism is something that children and adults of any age may do.

Bruxism can happen when you are awake or while you are sleeping. You may wake yourself up with a loud grating or grinding sound. The sound may even be loud enough that other people can hear it. However, bruxism may also be silent.

In this brochure:

- What is bruxism?
- What are the symptoms of bruxism?
- Your dentist may refer you to a sleep medicine physician
- You may need to try a few different treatments to find out what works for you

ADA Healthy Smile Tips

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between your teeth daily.
- Eat a healthy diet that limits sugary beverages and snacks.
- See your dentist regularly for prevention and treatment of oral disease.

For more information about taking care of your mouth and teeth, visit MouthHealthy.org, the ADA's website just for patients.



Bruxism and bite guard photos courtesy of Dr. William J. Moorhead, www.flemingsburgdental.com

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Do You Grind Your Teeth?





People who suffer from bruxism may have one or more of these symptoms:

- headache
- sore jaw or temporomandibular disorders (TMD)
- jaw clicking
- frequent toothaches
- sensitive teeth
- facial pain
- worn or cracked teeth or fillings
- markings from pressing your teeth into your tongue
- trouble sleeping

Your dentist may talk to you about your symptoms and examine you for any signs that bruxism might be a problem. In some cases, he or she may refer you to a sleep medicine physician for an evaluation.

What Causes Bruxism?

Stress and trouble sleeping are some things that may play a role in bruxism, but what is causing you to grind your teeth may not be known for sure. Children who clench or grind their teeth while sleeping are more likely to have other sleep-related issues, like snoring.

Your dentist can see if you have bruxism by checking for unusual wear spots on your teeth and looking at any related symptoms. Regular dental checkups are important to find damage in the early stages. Your dentist can help you manage bruxism and the related symptoms, as well as repair your teeth if necessary and help prevent further damage.



Teeth worn by bruxism

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Teeth worn by bruxism

How Is Bruxism Treated?

Treatment depends on each person's situation. Your dentist may recommend that you wear a **night guard** during sleep. Night guards are custom-made by your dentist from plastic or other materials. The night guard slips over your upper or lower teeth and prevents them from touching. It protects your teeth and helps keep them from wearing down.



Custom-made night guards protect teeth from wear.

Your dentist may also suggest one or more other treatments, such as these:

- ways to lower stress
- medication for pain or muscle spasms
- exercises to relax jaw muscles
- fillings or other dental treatment to repair damaged teeth

You may need to try a few different treatments to find out what works for you. You can help manage bruxism by paying attention to the symptoms, having regular dental visits and talking with your dentist.

Bruxism that is left untreated can cause future problems such as:

- tooth wear
- jaw pain
- headaches
- fractured teeth

Be sure to talk to your dentist if you have any signs of bruxism.