

Bruxism

tooth grinding and clenching

This information sheet has been designed to inform you of the treatment that has been proposed in your individual case. Please take the time to read the information and please do not hesitate to ask if you any queries.

Dr Thai has recommended a Nightguard because your teeth and/or jaw joints may show signs of:

- Accelerated wear of teeth
- Teeth that are worn and shortened
- Constant chipping and breaking teeth and/or fillings
- Internal fractures and splits
- Very sensitive teeth, "tooth brush abrasions"
- Clicking and/or locking jaw joint
- Earaches, headaches, migraines
- Neck or shoulder pain

Exactly why people grind is still not well known but there is definitely a correlation with stress and consequently the severity of bruxing will vary throughout your life. Lifestyle changes; stress reduction, improvements in general health, limiting caffeine intake, cessation of smoking etc will all reduce the tendency to grind but unfortunately the evidence suggests - once a bruxer always a bruxer!

- The most obvious effect of grinding is accelerated wear, the teeth becoming shorter with the effect of ageing the appearance of the patient.
- Clenching damage tends to go more unnoticed with the overloading pressure creating internal fracturing of the teeth. The end result is constant chipping and breaking of teeth and fillings and in some cases the cracks can go deep to the nerve chamber causing infections requiring root-canal procedures. In the worst case scenario the cracks can split a tooth necessitating extraction.
- It is universally recognised that crowns, veneers, bridges, implants and inlays placed in the mouths of bruxers are prone to porcelain fracture, or catastrophic failure due to overloading.
- Bruxers often have more sensitive teeth. Very sensitive 'tooth-brush abrasion' areas at the gum-line are now known to be caused by micro-fractures created in the teeth as a result of them flexing under excessive clenching pressures.
- Bruxing may cause the jaw joints may also become traumatized, resulting in clicking/locking joints and restriction in opening the mouth. This TMJ joint pain is commonly misdiagnosed as earache. The associated muscle tension commonly causes 'migraine like' headaches, muscle soreness and neck and shoulder pain.

Unfortunately the stresses of modern lifestyles have brought with them an alarming increase in the incidence of bruxism - the habit of clenching and grinding the teeth together under extreme pressure.

Although most of us are unaware of it occurring in our mouth, studies show that almost everyone grinds to some degree and up to 50% of the population has signs of significant wear on their teeth. Daytime bruxing is usually only mild and controlled in nature, but nocturnal grinding is very damaging and causes a number of serious problems. An ever increasing proportion of dental treatment is aimed at repairing the damage caused by bruxism. Untreated heavy bruxers can expect a lifetime of problems with their teeth and possibly even premature tooth loss.

Medical science is raising our life expectancy to continually higher levels. We need to ensure that the life span of your teeth is sufficient to enable you to continue to enjoy eating and maximize good digestion throughout your life.

Protecting with a Nightguard

A nightguard looks similar to a custom made mouth guard. It is worn while sleeping keeping the teeth apart and the jaw in a relaxed position.

Regular use of a nightguard is the only effective way to protect the teeth and if fitted and adjusted accurately they are quite comfortable to wear.

What's Involved:

1. Complete all restorations (fillings, crowns etc) prior to making the Nightguard
2. Special moulds of your teeth and bite are taken by the dentist
3. Our dental technician custom makes your nightguard from the moulds taken – this can take 1-2 weeks.
4. The nightguard is fitted by the dentist – this can take 30 – 60 minutes as the nightguard is fitted to your bite.

We recommend bringing your nightguard to each appointment at the dentist so that it may be checked and after any new fillings, adjusted.