

Bruxism (Tooth Grinding) in Adults



1. What is bruxism?

- Bruxism is the unconscious and involuntary habit of clenching or grinding teeth. This means that a person with bruxism is mostly unaware of, and unable to stop the habit.
 - It can take place at night when asleep or during the day.
 - As bruxism is related to stress, it is a fairly common problem.
 - Bruxism can affect the teeth, muscles, jaw joints (Temporomandibular joints), and the appearance of the face.

2. What are the signs and symptoms of bruxism?

- Excessive tooth wear caused by bruxism is not the same as normal tooth wear. These are the **symptoms**:
 - The teeth will be worn down, and become shorter. The dental term for this toothwear is **attrition**.
 - The teeth will become flattened, and the creamy/yellow **dentine** will be visible.
 - If bruxism is not treated, the teeth may be worn down to the level of the gums.
 - Teeth have a tendency to chip as a result of the grinding.
 - Tenderness and pain may be felt in the muscles and jaw joints on waking in the morning.
 - Eating may become painful because of restricted jaw movement.
 - Teeth can become **sensitive**, painful and loose, after they have been worn down or cracked by the grinding.
 - Extensive tooth wear can cause the jaws to close down too far, resulting in facial changes.
 - Unsightly creasing at the corners of the mouth will be evident.
 - Bruxism may also cause the development of prominent jaw muscles.
 - The sound of grinding teeth can disturb other people.



Severe bruxism



Moderate bruxism



Normal
toothwear
with ageing

toothwear

3. What causes bruxism?

- The main causes of bruxism are stress, psychological problems, and medical **conditions**.
- It may occur in people with cerebral palsy, or learning difficulties.

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4. How is bruxism treated?

- Bruxism is treated psychologically, dentally and by **medication**.
 - The psychological and medical causes are dealt with by psychologists, psychiatrists and doctors.
 - Behaviour modification through relaxation training may be used to treat bruxism.
- The dental treatment for bruxism is directed to preventing further damage to the teeth, and to the repair of the worn down teeth.
- The preventive treatment is to use a **nightguard**.
 - Nightguards can lessen the effects of bruxism:
 - They cannot cure the bruxism as they do not treat the cause, but they can protect the teeth from further damage.
 - Nightguards prevent the upper and lower teeth from grinding against each other.
 - An **acrylic** nightguard or **bite plate** may also relieve the **symptoms** of jaw joint disorders caused by bruxism.
 - Nightguards are provided by the dentist:
 - **Impressions** are taken of the upper and lower teeth.
 - They are sent to the dental laboratory where the nightguard is made.
 - Nightguards are designed to cover the biting and chewing surfaces of the teeth in one of the jaws, usually the upper.
 - They can be made from a soft plastic or a hard **acrylic** material.
 - A mouthguard is often supplied with the **cast** from which it was made.



Nightguard + cast



Nightguard



Nightguard in the mouth



Acrylic bite plate

5. How does the dentist treat the attrition caused by Bruxism?

- Where **bruxism** has resulted in severe **attrition**, the teeth will need to be restored:
 - **Replacement crowns** or **onlays** can be used to restore the worn down teeth.

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- These measures will restore the teeth to their normal size, and the jaws will regain their normal position.
- The dimensions and appearance of the teeth and face can be aesthetically improved with dental restorations.



Before



After replacement crowns