

Bruxism

Bruxism is grinding, gnashing or clenching your teeth during sleep or situations that make you anxious or tense. It may occur continually or sporadically. While some people brux so loudly that they disturb their sleep partners, others make no sound at all and may be completely unaware of the problem until tooth or jaw damage is discovered.

Of an estimated 30-40 million Americans affected by bruxism, 5 to 10 percent grind or clench their teeth severe enough to fracture dental restorations or cause other types of tooth damage. Severe bruxism also may cause headaches, facial pain and uncomfortable temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders.

Signs & Symptoms

Individuals experiencing bruxism may exhibit some or all of the following symptoms:

- Severe or loud grinding of teeth
- Tips of teeth worn down, flattened or chipped
- Enamel of teeth worn off, exposing inside of tooth
- Increased tooth sensitivity
- Jaw clenching or muscle contractions
- Jaw pain or tightness in the jaw muscles
- Popping, clicking or locking of jaw joint
- Earache due to violent jaw muscle contractions rather than the ear itself
- Dull morning headache
- Chronic facial pain
- Chewed tissue on the inside of the cheek in the mouth

Therapeutic Approach

While the therapeutic approach varies depending on the cause, the goal of treatment is to prevent permanent damage to your teeth and reduce pain caused by bruxism. In addition to conventional measures, which may include medication and dental work, complementary modalities such as CranioSacral Therapy can play an important role in a comprehensive therapeutic approach. Working on the craniosacral system can help balance asymmetries in the TMJ and associated structures, as well as decrease sympathetic nervous system tone to help decrease bruxism.