

# Teeth Grinding: Bruxism Treatment and Symptoms

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Teeth grinding, or "bruxism," can occur when people are awake or asleep. However, most people will grind teeth harder while asleep than awake. Grinding teeth in sleep is common and can seriously damage teeth, but bruxism treatment can provide some relief.

## Causes of Teeth Grinding

The exact causes of teeth grinding are difficult to pinpoint, but several factors may be involved, including:

- Anxiety
- Feelings of aggression
- Frustration
- Stress
- Suppressed anger
- Tension.

Teeth grinding may also be tied to growth and development, especially in cases where children's teeth don't fit together correctly. Abnormalities in dental or jaw structure also increase the risk of teeth grinding, and Parkinson's disease or Huntington's disease may trigger teeth grinding during sleep. In rare cases, teeth grinding may be a side effect of antidepressant medications. Drinking alcohol can make the damage done by teeth grinding worse.

## Teeth Grinding Effects

Grinding teeth in one's sleep can cause serious damage to teeth and jaws. The human mouth chews food with the force of 175 pounds per square inch, but teeth grinding without chewing food produces almost double the amount of force. This can result in serious damage, including:

- Cracked enamel
- Fractures in teeth
- Gum problems
- Jaw pain
- Tension headaches.

People who grind their teeth may suffer from other sleep disorders, including snoring, nocturnal awakenings, morning headaches and sleep apnea (irregular breathing during sleep). Although those who grind their teeth often report feeling sleepy during the day, a

clear link with other sleep disorders (such as insomnia, restless legs syndrome and periodic limb movement disorder) doesn't seem to exist.

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## Teeth Grinding Symptoms

It's difficult for someone to detect if they grind their teeth during sleep. Usually it takes a sleeping partner to inform the sufferer of his or her problem, and that is only because the teeth grinding keeps the partner awake.

If you suspect you are grinding your teeth in your sleep, talk to your dentist, who can usually confirm the condition with an exam. Dentists look for several signs of teeth grinding, including:

- Chewed tissue on inside of cheek
- Cracking of teeth
- Earaches caused by violent muscle contractions
- Flattened and worn-down teeth
- Ground-down teeth
- Joint damage in the jaw or jaw tension
- Headache Pain in the jaw joint and/or muscles
- Tooth sensitivity.

## Bruxism Treatment

Bruxism treatment includes learning to relax the jaw muscles at night. Since there seems to be a link between teeth grinding in sleep and stress, bruxism treatment also includes stress reduction and practicing relaxation techniques before bed.

Mouth guards or night guards are some of the best bruxism treatments. Dental mouth guards are made from impressions of teeth and formed of soft but durable plastic. A mouth guard provides bruxism treatment by keeping the teeth still in the mouth, stopping teeth grinding.

## Resources

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