

Teeth Grinding/Jaw Clenching (Bruxism)



Overview

This is an unconscious grinding or clenching of your teeth. We call it "bruxism." For many people, it happens during sleep. For others, it happens when they're awake. It can damage your teeth and cause other problems.

Causes

We aren't sure what causes this condition. Physical, psychological and genetic factors may all play a role. When it happens during sleep, it's considered a sleep-related movement disorder. If it happens when you are awake, it may be linked to stress and anger. It may help you cope with frustration. It may be something you do when you concentrate.

Symptoms

Symptoms include loud grinding during sleep that may wake you or your partner. Your teeth may be worn, chipped or broken. They may be sensitive. The insides of your cheeks may be damaged. Your jaw may be sore, tired and tight. It may lock. You may have pain in your neck, face or ear. You may have headaches.

Treatment

If your bruxism isn't severe, you may not need treatment. But if it's causing tooth or jaw problems, treatment will help. You can wear a mouth guard at night to protect your teeth. If you clench your teeth during the day, you may need to learn how to keep your jaw in the proper position. Your dentist can give you tips on how to do this. You may also need to learn to manage your stress or anger. Relaxation techniques may help. And for some people, medications are helpful. Your dentist or doctor can create a care plan that's right for you.