

## About Bruxism

Bruxism is excessive clenching or grinding of the teeth that is not part of normal chewing movements. Excessive wear on the teeth may result, sometimes even permanent damage to the teeth and jaw joints. Clenching and grinding may occur during the day but more commonly it happens at night. Patients have no conscious control over bruxism during sleep.

### Causes of bruxism:

- Physical stress such as illness or dehydration
- Psychological stress including anxiety and tension

### Signs and symptoms:

- Pain in teeth
- Sensitivity to heat and cold
- Chronic facial pain with tension headaches
- Noise as noticed by partners, friends or relatives that occur during clenching and grinding
- Worn teeth
- Micro-fractures of tooth enamel/chipped teeth
- Loose teeth with possible damage to the tooth sockets
- Stiffness and pain in the jaw joint muscles, sometimes causing restricted opening and difficult chewing
- Earache or pain in jaw joint

### Treatment aim:

- Remove the causes of bruxism
- Change the behaviour that causes bruxism
- Repair the damage that bruxism often causes

**Changing bruxism behaviour:**

An occlusal splint (also called a night guard) can be worn at night. It is made from moulded hard plastic that fits over the upper or lower teeth. It prevents further wear of the tooth surfaces.

