

POND SQUARE DENTAL

PATIENT INFORMATION

BRUXISM AND MODES OF TREATMENT

Tooth grinding or clenching is habitual, personality and stress related. It may happen at night time when you are sleeping, or any time when you are awake. You may or may not be aware that you are grinding or clenching your teeth.

If we record how long our teeth are in contact for while we are eating, it is usually in the order of seconds per day. We have a feedback mechanism which allows us to chew without really thinking about it. Whether we are eating hard or soft food, the ligaments around the roots of our teeth instantly feedback the biting force to our brain and back to the jaw closing/opening muscle. When clenching or grinding, the feedback mechanism does not work meaning the clenching force is sometimes hundreds of times greater than normal and this can happen for many hours a day or night. This has a significant impact on our teeth.

Symptoms vary from no symptoms to severe symptoms and can include:

- Jaw click, or sore jaw joint or joints
- Headaches
- Neck ache
- Stiff jaws
- Lock jaw
- Sensitive teeth
- Chipped teeth
- Cracked teeth
- Broken teeth
- Loose teeth
- Difficulty in chewing
- Limited jaw opening
- A feeling as though the teeth don't meet together properly or as they used to

Reducing stress and changing habits are very good ways to reduce tooth grinding, however this is often not very easy.

LOVE YOUR SMILE

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Using Models or Scans of Your Teeth to Assess Your Bite

We can take models or casts of your teeth and set the models on a jaw replicator. We can then assess if there are simple changes we can make to your teeth that might reduce unfavourable grinding forces. This may include adding a little filling material in some areas, or removing a little tooth in other areas.

The process of taking the casts, setting them up and analysing them costs from £400.

We can also take an intra oral (light) scan of your teeth periodically. This is stored digitally, and the level of wear can be measured and logged over time. This costs £200 per scan.

Splints

We can also make splints. A splint or bite guard is a device that looks a little like a sports guard. The splint keeps your teeth apart and wears instead of your teeth.

Generally there are two types of splint, and these usually cover your upper teeth, though there are variations.

A soft splint is simply a soft plastic made to fit over your upper teeth, and wears instead of your teeth. The softness is sometimes thought to make you chew on the splint so this type of splint does not necessarily provide symptom relief or therapeutic value. A soft splint can be made by the hygienist, requiring an impression of your top teeth only. A week later the splint is fitted. This costs £425.

A hard splint, or Michigan type splint is a hard acrylic that sits over your upper teeth, This type of splint is harder wearing, but also designed to allow you to move your teeth in a way that is not harmful and is also thought to provide therapeutic value or symptom relief. This type of splint requires an impression of your upper and lower teeth, and the construction and fitting process is also more involved, requiring expertise and precision. Both the impression and fitting appointments take around an hour and are set about two weeks apart. The cost is typically £1500.

A medium hardness, printed version of the Michigan splint is also available, costing less, from £750 but typically £950.

Though initially a splint may not seem comfortable to use, people often report that they actually cannot get by without their splints.

If you are grinding or clenching your teeth you may have cracked or chipped teeth and these may require restoration with filling material or crowns. Please refer to our info sheet on cracked teeth.

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Muscle thinning/relaxing injections

A common and mainstream type of treatment is to place Botox in the main clenching muscles. This helps to thin and relax muscles, reducing biting forces. There is no change to the appearance of the face or muscle - to do this a long course of treatment would be needed.

The process, which is fairly painless, may need to be repeated every 6 months up to three times.

This mode of treatment is usually done in conjunction with the splint, however, where a splint cannot be tolerated, this is an excellent stand alone treatment. There can be immediate and prolonged symptom relief, and in the long term it is hoped tooth wear and tooth cracking are reduced.

The process costs from £500 per session. There may be a consultation fee of £160 (depending on whether treatment is taken up or not).

Other approaches

Hypnotherapy and psychotherapy/counselling can be used to address bruxism.

Diet can also play an important component. Stimulants such as tea and coffee, and depressants such as alcohol can lead to increased bruxism. Having a balanced, healthy diet is important as always.

Prescribed or over the counter medications may also increase bruxism.

Recreational drugs are linked with tooth grinding or clenching habits. These types of habits should be addressed.

Stress management

Tooth grinding or clenching is stress related. Reducing and managing stress levels is an important component of reducing the level of grinding or clenching.

Where you need help in managing stress, you should seek help, and we are always ready to listen and help where we can.

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