

# Eggert Family Dentistry

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## Bruxism - the Clenching and Grinding of Teeth

### What is it?

Bruxism is a habit of grinding or clenching the teeth. Clenching means you tightly hold your top and bottom teeth together. Grinding occurs when you slide your teeth back and forth over each other.

There are a few symptoms that are characteristic of bruxism: *headaches, sore jaw, knowledge of clenching or grinding, frequent toothaches, facial pain, worn or fractured tooth enamel, loose teeth, earaches, or insomnia.*

### How do you develop bruxism?

Bruxism can develop at any age, and children as well as adults can have the habit of grinding their teeth. Although the causes of bruxism are not certain, several factors may be involved. Stressful situations, sleep disorders, an abnormal bite, and crooked or missing teeth may all be responsible.

We can diagnose bruxism by looking for unusual wear spots on your teeth. Regular dental checkups are important to detect damage in the early stages. We can treat irregular wear on teeth and facial pain that may result from bruxism.

### How is bruxism treated?

Depending on what is causing your bruxism, we may recommend different treatment options:

- If **stress** is the cause of bruxism, we may recommend that you find ways to relax. Reading a book, listening to quiet music, taking a walk or a warm bath may help. You may also be asked to apply a warm washcloth or compress to the side of your face to help the muscles relax. Practicing relaxation techniques may also be helpful. If you have difficulty handling stress, counseling may point to effective ways for dealing with stressful situations.
- We may also suggest a **night-guard** to wear while you sleep. Night-guards are helpful for bruxism caused by sleep disorders, crooked or missing teeth or stress. Custom-made from a plastic material to fit your teeth, the night-guard slips over the upper or lower teeth and prevents contact between them. It helps relieve the pressure of grinding or clenching, which can damage delicate jaw joints and tooth nerves.
- Treatment for an abnormal bite may involve reducing the “high spots” on one or more teeth. For serious cases, we may suggest orthodontic treatment or **reshaping and reconstructing** the biting surfaces with inlays or crowns.

The pain from bruxism can be relieved by paying attention to the symptoms, frequent dental visits, and good communication with us, your dental professionals.