



Teeth grinding: Causes & solutions

Teeth grinding is a movement disorder of the jaw in which there is gnashing, grinding, or clenching of the teeth. It's called bruxism. Often, people are unaware of their habit.



The two primary types of teeth grinding are sleep bruxism, which occurs during sleep, and awake bruxism, which occurs when the person is awake.

Several factors can have a role in developing teeth grinding (bruxism). These include:

- Stress, anxiety
- Consuming alcohol or caffeine
- Misaligned, missing, or crooked teeth
- Sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea
- Genetic factors
- Certain medicines to treat depression and seizures

While some people noticeably grind their teeth, 80% make no sound, which makes bruxism even harder to discover. Common symptoms include reports of grinding noises during sleep by family members, tooth hypersensitivity, fractured, chipped or worn teeth, and waking up with a constant, dull headache or sore jaws.

If you grind your teeth, it is important to safeguard them from further wear. Regular dental checkups can help detect bruxism, and your dentist may recommend these methods to help stop or relieve the symptoms:

- Find ways to reduce your stress level and relax.

- Avoid or limit the amount of caffeine and alcohol you consume.
- Ask your dentist about using a night guard to protect your teeth while you sleep. A custom guard that your dentist creates will give you the most comfortable fit. Night guards are not the same as sports guards, which have extra padding and will not feel comfortable for sleep.

When children grind their teeth, it is not usually the result of stress. More often, it's due to allergies or teeth that don't line up properly. Children often outgrow teeth grinding by adolescence.