

BRUXISM

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

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DESCRIPTION

Mosby's Medical, Nursing, and Allied Health Dictionary defines bruxism as: "the compulsive, unconscious grinding and/or clenching of the teeth, especially during sleep or as a mechanism for the release of tension during periods of extreme stress in the waking hours."

Bruxism is one of many oral habits called parafunctional habits literally meaning "in addition to normal function". Other oral habits would include gum chewing, chewing of other foreign objects such as ice, toothpicks, or pencils, nail biting or tooth tapping as examples. These habits are very destructive to teeth and surrounding tissues. It is thought that as many as 1 out of 3 people are bruxers.

- Anxiety, stress or tension
- Response to pain or physical discomfort anywhere in the body
- Complications from other disorders, such as Parkinson's Disease
- Side effects of some medications

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Temporomandibular dysfunction (TMD), a painful muscular dysfunction and joint disorder
- Damage to teeth or jaw
- Tension-type headaches
- Facial pain

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Tooth sensitivity to cold and biting pressure
- Loose teeth
- Cracked teeth or restorations
- Muscle tenderness or pain in cheek muscles, temples, or back of the neck
- Jaw joint pain or clicking
- Roommates report that you make grinding sounds while you sleep

TREATMENT

- Recognizing that bruxism is a problem for you is the first step.
- Stress management techniques may improve the problem. This includes professional counseling, exercise, meditation, and bio-feedback. These services may be obtained by calling the Counseling and Psychological Services at (618)453-5371.
- The harmful effects of bruxism are most effectively treated with a protective appliance called a night guard or occlusal guard. This is a clear appliance that is fitted to either upper or lower teeth that prevents contact between upper and lower teeth and maintains correct jaw joint position. It is usually worn at night.
- Identifying and treating the underlying cause of body pain or discomfort which may be contributing to bruxism.
- Adjusting medications if bruxism developed as a side effect.
- As always, complete dental examinations on a regular basis and prompt completion of recommended treatment is the best policy for good dental health.

DIAGNOSTIC SIGNS

- Flat, polished wear facets (spots) on biting surfaces of teeth
- Cracked tooth syndrome
- Changes in bone surrounding tooth roots on x-rays
- Drifted teeth
- Worn tooth enamel
- Gum tissue recession, uncovering tooth roots
- Notching of teeth at the gum line (abfraction)

CAUSES

Bruxism causes are not completely understood. Possible causes are:

- Abnormal alignment of upper and lower teeth

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