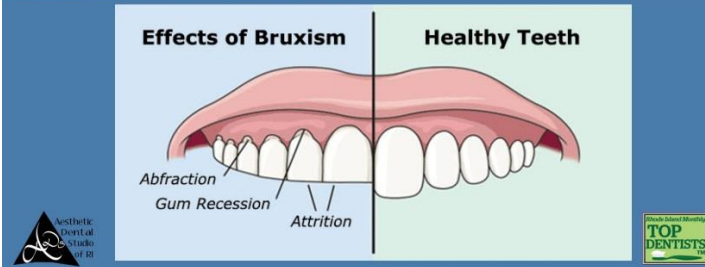




BRUXISM=TEETH GRIDDING
Candida Castillo D.M.D, F.A.G.D; C.A.G.S
2148 Mineral Spring Ave. North providence RI 02911 www.smileri.com
401-232-7777



According to Rob E. Sale, DDS, it takes more than managing stress to prevent destructive teeth grinding for the millions of Americans affected with this common disorder.

Bruxism is a condition in which you grind, gnash or clench your teeth. If you have bruxism, you may unconsciously clench your teeth when you're awake (awake bruxism) or clench or grind them during sleep (sleep bruxism). **Sleep bruxism** is considered a sleep-related movement disorder. People who clench or grind their teeth (brux) during sleep are more likely to have other sleep disorders, such as snoring and pauses in breathing (sleep apnea). Mild bruxism may not require treatment. However, in some people, bruxism can be frequent and severe enough to lead to jaw disorders, headaches, damaged teeth, jaw and neck pain/soreness, tooth pain and sensitivity, and other problems.

How find out if you grind your teeth?

Because grinding often occurs during sleep, most people are unaware that they grind their teeth. However, a dull, constant headache or sore jaw when you wake up is a telltale symptom of bruxism. Many times, people learn that they grind their teeth by their loved one who hears the grinding at night.

If you suspect you may be grinding your teeth, talk to your dentist. He or she can examine your mouth and jaw for signs of bruxism, such as jaw tenderness and excessive wear on your teeth.

Why Is Teeth Grinding Harmful?

In some cases, teeth grinding can result in a fracturing, loosening, or loss of teeth. The chronic grinding wears teeth down to stumps. When these events

happen, bridges, crowns, root canals, implants, partial dentures, and even complete dentures may be needed. Other signs include

Should I be aware of any risk factors
increase your risk of bruxism:

These factors

- **Stress.** Increased anxiety or stress can lead to teeth grinding. So, can anger and frustration.
- **Age.** Bruxism is common in young children, but it usually goes away by adulthood.
- **Personality type.** Having a personality type that's aggressive, competitive or hyperactive can increase your risk of bruxism.
- **Medications and other substances.** Bruxism may be an uncommon side effect of some psychiatric medications, such as certain antidepressants. Smoking tobacco, drinking caffeinated beverages or alcohol, or using recreational drugs may increase the risk of bruxism.
- **Family members with bruxism.** Sleep bruxism tends to occur in families. If you have bruxism, other members of your family also may have bruxism or a history of it.
- **Other disorders.** Bruxism can be associated with some mental health and medical disorders, such as Parkinson's disease, dementia, gastroesophageal reflux disorder (GERD), epilepsy, night terrors, sleep-related disorders such as sleep apnea, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

What Can I Do to Stop Grinding My Teeth?

Your dentist can fit you with a mouth guard to protect your teeth from grinding during sleep.

If stress is causing you to grind your teeth, ask your doctor or dentist about options to reduce your stress. Attending stress counseling, starting an exercise program, seeing a physical therapist, or obtaining a prescription for muscle relaxants are among some of the options that may be offered.

If a sleeping disorder is causing the grinding, treating it may reduce or eliminate the grinding habit.

Other tips to help you stop teeth grinding include:

- Avoid or cut back on foods and drinks that contain caffeine, such as colas, chocolate, and coffee.
- Avoid alcohol. Grinding tends to intensify after alcohol consumption.
- Do not chew on pencils or pens or anything that is not food. Avoid chewing gum as it allows your jaw muscles to get more used to clenching and makes you more likely to grind your teeth.
- Train yourself not to clench or grind your teeth. If you notice that you clench or grind during the day, position the tip of your tongue between your teeth. This practice trains your jaw muscles to relax.

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