



Unusual grinding sounds during sleep are symptoms of bruxism. be sure to mention it at your child's next dentist appointment.

During regular dental exams, your dentist likely will check for physical signs of bruxism, such as unusual wear and tear on your teeth, broken dental restorations and tooth sensitivity. If you have any of these signs, your dentist will look for changes in your teeth and mouth over the next several visits to see if you need treatment. You may also be asked to return for additional exams.

If your dentist suspects that you have bruxism, he or she will try to determine its cause by asking questions about your stress level, your general dental health, your daily medications, and whether you routinely drink alcohol or caffeinated beverages, especially during the evening. If you share your bedroom, your dentist may also ask your roommate or partner about your sleep habits, especially about any unusual grinding sounds heard during the night.

In most cases, bruxism doesn't cause serious complications. But severe bruxism may lead to:

- Damage to your teeth or jaw
- Tension-type headaches
- Facial pain

Temporomandibular disorders which occur in the temporomandibular joints (TMJs), located just in front of your ears and felt when opening and closing your mouth

Treatment

In many cases, no treatment is necessary. Many kids outgrow bruxism without special treatment, and many adults don't brux badly enough to require therapy. However, if the problem is severe, treatment options include:

- **Stress management.** If you grind your teeth because of stress, you may be able to prevent the problem with professional counselling or strategies that promote relaxation, such as exercise and meditation. If your child grinds his or her teeth because of tension or fear, it may help to talk about your child's fears just before bed or to help your child relax with a warm bath or a favourite book.
- **Dental approaches.** If you or your child has bruxism, your doctor may suggest a mouth guard or protective dental appliance (splint) to prevent damage to your teeth. Your dentist can make a custom mouth guard to fit your mouth. In severe cases when tooth wear has led to sensitivity or the inability to chew properly your dentist may need to use overlays or crowns to entirely reshape the chewing surfaces of your teeth.
- **Behaviour therapy.** Once you discover that you have bruxism, you may be able to change the behaviour by practicing proper mouth and jaw position. Concentrate on resting your tongue upward with your teeth apart and your lips closed. This should keep your teeth from grinding and your jaw from clenching.
- **Medications.** In general, medications aren't very effective for treatment of bruxism. In some cases, your doctor may suggest taking a muscle relaxant before bedtime. If you develop bruxism as a side effect of an antidepressant medication, your doctor may change your medication or prescribe another medication to counteract your bruxism. Botulinum toxin (Botox) injections may help some people with severe bruxism that hasn't responded to other treatments.

Self-care

These self-care steps may prevent or help treat bruxism:

- **Limit alcohol, tobacco and caffeine.** Cutting down on your daily intake of alcohol, tobacco and caffeine or giving up these substances entirely may help, because they seem to make bruxism worse.
- **Reduce stress.** Keeping your life stresses to a minimum can reduce your risk of developing bruxism. The less anxiety and tension you feel, the better chance you have of avoiding bruxism.
- **Consult your partner.** If you have a roommate or partner, ask him or her to be aware of any grinding or clicking sounds that you might make while sleeping. Your partner can then let you know if he or she notices any teeth-grinding sounds in the night.
- **Have regular dental exams.** Dental exams are the best way to screen against bruxism, especially if you live alone or don't have a partner who can observe bruxism at night. Your dentist can best spot signs of bruxism in your mouth and jaw with regular visits and examinations.

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