

## THE DAILY GRIND

Do you ever wake up with sore teeth, a sore jaw or headaches? Your daily grind (and we don't mean coffee) may be a special blend of stressors that percolate into a bad habit of clenching and grinding your teeth. If you are a daily grinder, you should see your orthodontist or dentist for assistance.

Commonly known as bruxism, grinding is a common problem for all ages and most do so without realizing it. It's no big surprise that stress is the number one reason for grinding one's teeth. Everyone deals with stress differently – some clench or grind only during times of crisis then stop when the critical time has passed, and others “brux” subconsciously both at night and during the day. The jaw is a powerful instrument and can exert 300 pounds of pressure. If left untreated, bruxism can lead to cracked, broken or excessively worn teeth, enamel loss, sensitivity and joint problems.

The most effective treatment for bruxism is a night guard, a custom fitted, solid acrylic mouthpiece made for either arch and is typically worn at night. It does not prevent clenching or grinding, but protects the teeth from abrasion and enamel loss by distributing the pressure evenly. A night guard can also eliminate problems in your bite that may contribute to grinding as well as prevent pain in the teeth and jaws, which in turn allows inflammation to heal. Inexpensive night guards are available; however, due to an improper fit these can make grinding worse and create more joint problems. Soft mouthpieces may even worsen the habit as the jaw can find it easy to chew on the rubbery material. An orthodontist is specially trained to diagnose and treat bite problems and should be your first line of defense against the clenching and grinding habit.

No one can eliminate stress completely, but its effects can be treated with great success. Then the only kind of daily grind with which you concern yourself is dark or medium roast!

- Carl K. Walker, D.M.D., M.S.

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