



Bite Guard Therapy Instruction

Research shows in patients who have periodontal disease, bruxism (clenching and/or grinding) hastens the spread of the disease in affected teeth and is a leading cause of gum recession. Studies show that the force from clenching during sleep can be over 100 times greater than normal chewing forces. By fitting your teeth with a bite guard, we equalize the forces of your bite and protect the teeth from lateral torquing forces.

I am not aware of clenching or grinding...Research shows that most people who clench or grind do so, especially in certain stages of sleep, when they are unaware of bodily movement. You may have days or weeks between episodes.

A spouse often detects grinding as you sleep. However, clenching makes little or no noise and can deliver greater and more damaging forces to the supporting structures of the teeth. Actively clenching during the day is not uncommon in high stress jobs.

Non-custom soft bite guards may be helpful for protection from injury during contact sports, but they may not be helpful to treat night time bruxing, especially in patients with periodontal disease. Construction of a custom bite guard can consist of two appointments or could be made in office during one visit. At the two appointment fabrication: the first appointment would consist of impressions of both arches. Models are made from the impressions and sent to a laboratory, which constructs the bite guard to our specifications. During the second appointment, the bite guard is carefully fitted and adjusted as needed to the specific bite pattern/clenching positions. Because pressure of the biting force is much greater while clenching during sleep, we must be sure that as many of the teeth as possible are contacting the bite guard, distributing the force equally. At the one office visit appointment the appliance is fabricated and adjusted same day.

How often should I have my bite guard adjusted?....Bite guards should be checked yearly for wear, usually at your six month dental cleaning. Bite guards can be adjusted or relined to accommodate new dental restorations. However, some cases may require that a bite guard be remade. If at any point your bite guard feels uneven or it cannot be seated easily, please make an appointment for an adjustment. Adjustments for bite guards are of no charge to you.

How do I keep my bite guard clean?...We recommend brushing your bite guard with a toothbrush (or denture brush) daily. Do not use toothpaste as it can create micro scratches on the surface, allowing more plaque and bacteria to adhere to the appliance. To periodically remove calculus (tartar) that may accumulate, feel free to soak the appliance in a solution made from products such as Efferdent or even household vinegar. Bring your bite guard to your dental cleaning appointments and we will clean it for you at no charge.

How long should the bite guard last?...It depends on how vigorously the clenching or grinding is occurring. Some patients are vigorous grinders and may grind holes and grooves in the bite guards within a year. Many patients find the bite guards to last for several years. By bringing the bite guard in for inspection and cleaning periodically, the longevity of the appliance increases.

How can I wear both my retainer and my bite guard?...The bite guard takes the place of an orthodontic retainer and functions to dissipate clenching and grinding forces and to maintain tooth position. If you have a retainer for the teeth not in the bite guard, please continue to wear it along with your bite guard.

The bite guard is made of hard acrylic and will crack and break if it is dropped on a hard surface. Keep the bite guard away from pets as it commonly becomes a "chew toy".