

# Teeth Grinding

## What is teeth grinding?

Teeth grinding happens when you clench your teeth and rub them together.

Usually the grinding doesn't hurt the teeth. However, the surface of the teeth can get worn down by the grinding. Teeth that are very worn down may cause problems such as decay, infections and cracks, or it may be difficult for you to chew food properly. The grinding could damage your jaw.

## What is the cause?

A number of things may cause teeth grinding. For example:

- Your top and bottom teeth may not fit together well.
- You may grind your teeth to relieve tooth pain. Grinding puts pressure on the area around an inflamed tooth, which may lessen the pain for a short time.
- You may grind your teeth because you feel tense, fearful, or angry.

Teeth grinding can happen at any age. It may become a habit.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms may include:

- Teeth grinding or clenching, which may be loud enough for others to hear
- Worn teeth
- Sensitive teeth
- Jaw pain, earache, or tightness in jaw muscles
- Headache
- Popping and clicking of the jaw

Most adults grind their teeth only at night. If you are feeling very stressed, you may also grind your teeth during the day. If it continues for too long, it may develop into a habit that needs to be treated.

## How is it treated?

If needed, dentists can polish your teeth to make them fit together more comfortably. Your dentist may recommend a bite block (also called a night guard). A bite block is a plastic mouthpiece that stops your teeth from grinding together. It's usually worn only at night.

Consider seeing a counselor to talk about things that may be causing tension, fear, or anger.

## **How can I take care of myself?**

If your teeth grinding may be related to stress, learn ways to manage stress. Ask for help at home and work when the load is too great to handle. Find ways to relax. For example, take up a hobby, listen to music, watch movies, or take walks. Try deep breathing exercises when you feel stressed.

Contact your healthcare provider or dentist if you have any questions or your symptoms seem to be getting worse.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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