

Night Guards

Why should I wear a night guard?

We have recommended a night guard to protect your teeth and jaws from **bruxism**. The term bruxism describes a very common clenching or grinding activity that occurs most often at night while asleep. Tremendous forces can be generated during bruxism resulting in worn down teeth, sore teeth, fractured teeth, and sore jaw muscles.

Because it is usually a night time activity, most people who brux regularly are not aware of it. It is safe to say that everyone has bruxed or clenched their teeth during night time sleep at one time or another. It is just that some people are more vigorous than others, and tend to brux more often. It has also been shown that bruxing is more prevalent during periods of increased day to day stress.

What does the night guard do?

The night guard is a simple plastic overlay which rests over the teeth (usually the upper) and allows uniform contact of the opposing teeth against the plastic of the night guard. Patients may still continue to grind and clench with the night guard in place, however they are now unable to put excessive biting forces on individual teeth, and the biting load is distributed evenly over many teeth. The sideways and forward jaw movements are now smooth “gliding” movements which are much easier on the teeth and jaw muscles. Because the plastic is softer than natural tooth structure, any wear will occur in the night guard and not on the teeth themselves.

When should I wear the night guard?

Depending on your own particular situation, Dr. Bridger will advise you when the night guard should be worn. Typically, it should be worn every night just before retiring, however day time wear is sometimes indicated.

How do I care for my new night guard?

Cleaning of the night guard is important. Simply brush the guard with your regular tooth brush and a small amount of toothpaste. This should be done at least once a day. When possible, the night guard should be kept moist. This means that when you are not wearing the guard, it should be kept in water or in the provided plastic case with a moist gauze. The plastic case and gauze are helpful particularly when travelling. Avoid wrapping the night guard in Kleenex or leaving it on top of your bedroom dresser.

Will I have trouble adjusting to the night guard?

Most patient's require at least a few nights of wearing the guard before getting used to it. It is not uncommon for patients to take it out in the middle of the night and to find it in a corner of the bedroom or in the bed sheets in the morning. It may take some initial perseverance before being accustomed to falling asleep with the guard in place.

Must I wear the night guard for the rest of my life?

Dr. Bridger will recommend a long term schedule of wear for you. Some patients who brux regularly may be faced with long term use of the night guard. Other patients who only have acute symptoms once in a while may only require sporadic use of the guard as required.