

OCCLUSAL (BITE) GUARDS

Making a Bite Guard Appliance

The appliance constructed to eliminate or reduce the adverse effects of a bruxing and/or grinding habit(s) is made of a rigid plastic. It is custom-made to fit your mouth exactly. It will take two visits to complete. It can only be inserted one-way; it will not stay in place if it is inserted improperly. At the first visit, we will make impressions of your upper and lower teeth and record the occlusal (bite) relation of your jaws. After the bite guard is made, you will return for a second visit a week or two later for adjustments and delivery. At the second appointment, the appliance will be adjusted so that your teeth properly meet the plastic. The appliance fits just around the biting surfaces of the teeth of the top jaw. It will not cover the roof of your mouth.

After the appliance has been delivered, you will be expected to return in a few weeks with the appliance for observation and possible further adjustments. You should at no time have any pain or soreness in muscles or joints around your face or ears, whether or not you are wearing the bite guard. It is meant to protect your natural teeth (enamel and dentin) from unnatural, pathologic wear caused by the bruxing or grinding habit. Since the plastic of the appliance is "softer" than your remaining enamel, the plastic will wear when you brux or grind. Expect the plastic to last about 2 years – longer if you do not have a severe problem, shorter if the habits are very abusive.

Wearing Your Appliance

After you receive the protective guard, please wear it as instructed. If you grind or brux at night while sleeping (very common), wear the guard while you sleep. If you brux or grind during the day, try to identify when during the day you have the problem (stuck in traffic, talking on the phone, working at a desk) and wear the guard at that time. Becoming aware of the times of day or stresses that cause you to clench or grind may help you to break the habit.

If at any time, you develop soreness of the muscles around the temporomandibular joint or TMJ (jaw joint), stop wearing the bite guard and call the office. The TMJ is the hinge joint in front of each ear; you can feel them when you open and close your mouth. Do not wear the bite guard again until we have had a chance to evaluate your situation.

Length of Treatment

How long must you wear the protective appliance? It all depends on the nature of your problem. If this application is being used to prevent stress-related abnormal wear of your teeth, then you will need to wear it until you are no longer burdened by heavy stress. When the source of the problem is eliminated or resolved, the problem may disappear and you will no longer need to wear the appliance. We will periodically evaluate your condition.

When you are not wearing your bite guard, it should be cleaned with a soft toothbrush and water to remove any plaque and stored in a dry place.

Please bring your bite guard with you when you come in for your routine dental hygiene prophylaxis appointment so that we can check the appliance and make sure that it is functioning well. Always stay on the recare interval that we have designated for you. When dental problems are diagnosed in the very early stages, the treatment is usually easier (and less expensive).

Keep the bite guard clean. When you are finished wearing the appliance, brush it with a toothbrush and toothpaste, rinse it, dry it, and store it in a provided container. If it cannot be brushed immediately, at least rinse it under clean water to remove any saliva or debris.

If you have any questions about antibruxing/antigrinding appliances, please feel free to ask us.