

The link between grinding, clenching and headaches...



Recent studies have shown a link between nighttime tooth grinding and headaches. For people who grind or clench, the muscles that open and close the jaw can become painful from overuse, causing a range of symptoms from tension to migraine headaches. Fortunately, headache sufferers may now find relief with the use of a nighttime bite splint (nightguard).

Dentistry has traditionally focused on the premature tooth wear caused by grinding and clenching. As many as one-third of people in the U.S. wear their teeth significantly more than normal.

These “grinders” can develop sensitivity to temperature and certain foods, and their teeth become more prone to fractures. For most people, this wear will not be visually

evident until later in life when many end up needing dental work to restore teeth to their original function.

Bruxing (grinding) or clenching teeth is defined as abnormal tooth contact. Ordinarily, teeth are in contact while eating and swallowing, only about 10 to 15 minutes on a daily basis. People who grind or clench their teeth



This patient had worn down and chipped teeth due to the nightly bruxing and clenching condition.



A combination of crowns and veneers were used to restore the patients natural tooth shape.

Can you say Mississippi?

In the September 2001 JADA, Jeremy Shulman, DDS, MS, writes that successful therapy must include instruction in habit modification, “both during the day and especially during sleep when clenching and grinding habits are prevalent.”

First, you must become aware of daytime grinding or clenching. Dr. Shulman suggests that you may begin to eliminate these bad habits by reprogramming: simply say, “Mississippi,” and maintain the posture of the jaw after the last syllable to remind yourself of the jaw’s desired resting position.

during the day, or while sleeping, can have their teeth in heavy contact for as many as six hours a day! This is why researchers say that one night of grinding is equivalent to 80 days of normal wear on your teeth. The American Dental Association estimates that 95% of the American population suffers from a grinding or clenching condition at some point in their lives. Some people may do so much damage to their front teeth that they appear to have no teeth at all when they smile. When the teeth are severely worn down, the vertical height between the upper and lower jaw is reduced. Wrinkles appear around the lips and

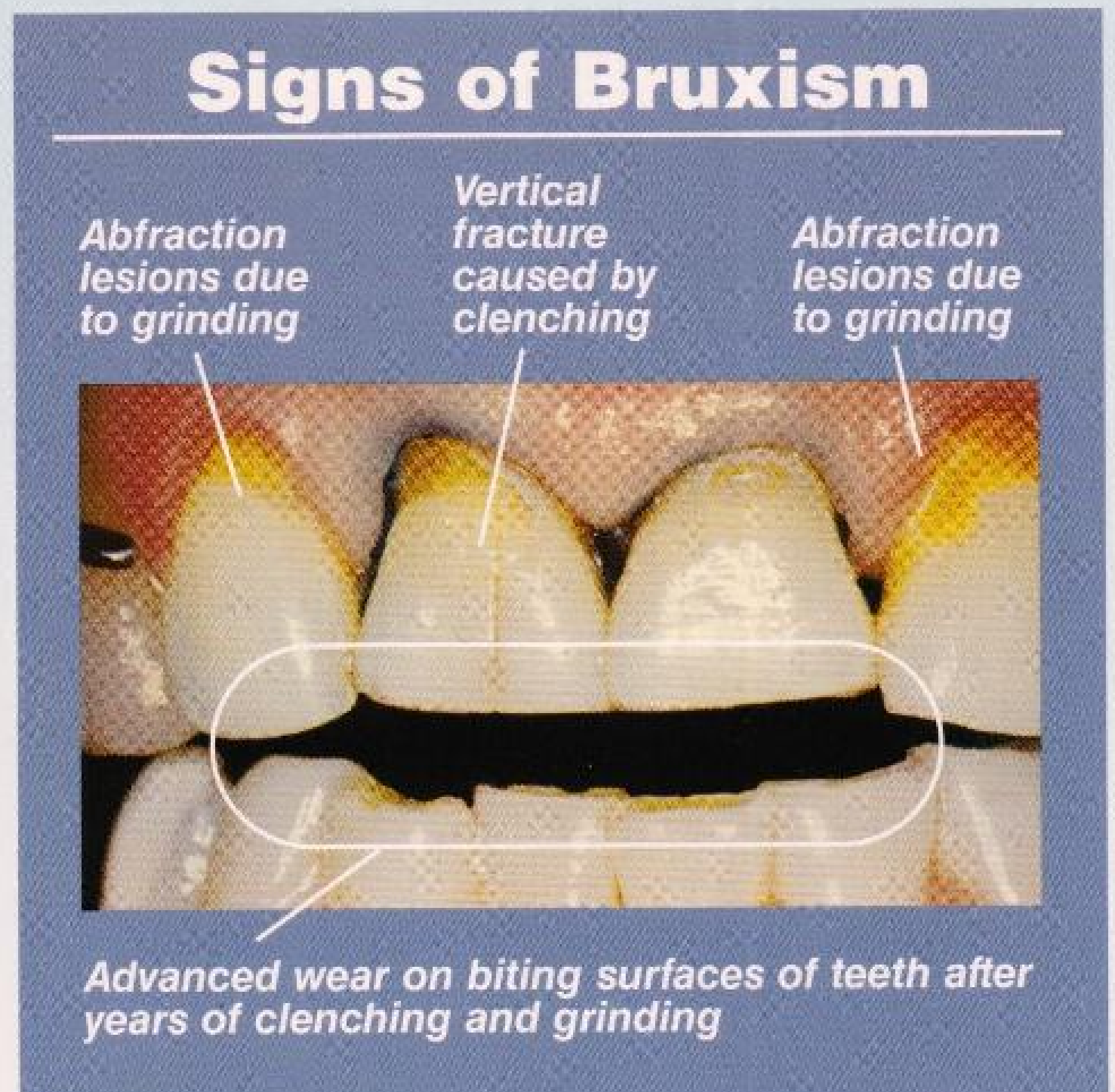
cheeks as a result of the jaws coming closer together. Porcelain restorations can renew a smile that has been damaged by clenching or grinding. However, if the condition is diagnosed early enough, the inevitable destruction

of the teeth can be slowed, or prevented completely by use of a bite splint or nightguard. With your dentist's help, and the help of a bite splint, you can look forward to giving up your grinding headache!



A bite splint is a hard, soft or hard/soft combination appliance that fits onto your teeth and keeps them from coming in contact with each other if you grind or clench, thereby preventing tooth damage. One of the advantages of wearing a bite splint is that the treatment is completely reversible, since it can be removed from the mouth at any time. No other treatment protects the teeth during grinding or clenching as well, or as inexpensively as a bite splint.

Have your dentist check your teeth for the signs of clenching and grinding. There may be premature wearing of enamel that causes the underlying layer of tooth (dentin) to be exposed. Another sign of grinding is an abfraction lesion. Check for these small V-shaped notches by running your finger across the gum line on the cheek sides of your teeth. They should be restored with bonding material.



Signs of Bruxism

Abfraction lesions due to grinding

Vertical fracture caused by clenching

Abfraction lesions due to grinding



Advanced wear on biting surfaces of teeth after years of clenching and grinding