

Baby Grinding Teeth: What Parents Should Do

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During the first year of life, your baby has a lot going on. One of the most notable developments revolves around teething. As each tooth emerges, your baby experiences new sensations and discomforts.

Have you noticed your baby grinding their teeth? In most cases, this action isn't anything more than simple exploring. But if it happens often, your baby might have bruxism, a condition where they regularly grind their teeth.

Here's more about bruxism, what causes it, and how to treat it naturally.

Bruxism is a medical condition where you regularly grind your teeth. It affects babies, children, and adults. It can happen during the day and at night. During the evening hours, it's known as sleep bruxism. The good news is that most cases are mild and don't require any treatment.

Symptoms of bruxism include:

- teeth grinding or jaw clenching
- grinding loud enough to hear
- damaged or worn teeth
- jaw pain or soreness
- earache or headache near temples

Infants cannot verbally tell you what's bothering them, so it can be hard to know what's going on. That said, even though the sound of the grinding is difficult to bear, your baby is probably just fine.

Your baby's first tooth might appear in his mouth as early as 4 months after birth. Many babies will get their first tooth after the 7-month mark. They'll get more of them throughout the rest of the first year, which is when you might start to notice grinding.

About 1 in 3 people are affected by bruxism. For adults, the cause can stem from stress or anger, personality type (competitive, hyperactive, etc.), and even exposure to certain stimulants like caffeine or tobacco. Sometimes the cause is unknown.

Age is another factor. Babies may grind their teeth in response to pain from teething. Bruxism is also relatively common in younger children. It typically disappears by the teen years.

Many babies and children outgrow teeth grinding naturally. No other treatment is needed. Complications at this age are rare.

Older kids with bruxism should be watched more closely to make sure they aren't damaging their adult teeth. They may develop temporomandibular joint disease (TMJ) from repeatedly clenching their jaw.

Bruxism isn't always related to teething, but the two can go hand-in-hand during baby's first year.

If you notice your baby grinding his teeth, try offering him a teething toy to gnaw on. There are a variety of types you can test out to see which one works best.

- Natural rubber teething rings, like Vulli's Sophie the Giraffe, are soft and comforting. They contain no phthalates or bisphenol A (BPA).
- Ice teething rings, like Nuby Soother Rings, have a small amount of liquid in them that holds a chill. The coolness can ease away pain from teeth poking through the gums.
- Wooden teething rings, like these Maple Teethers, are soft and chemical-free. They're also naturally antimicrobial.
- Silicone teething necklaces, like Chewbeads, are great for when you're out and about. They let your baby do some hands-free chewing whenever they feel the urge.

Homemade teething aids can take many forms. Try wetting most of a washcloth and folding it into quarters. Then freeze for a few hours and let your baby hold it by the dry quarter. The cold and firmness should bring them relief.

Some parents use amber teething necklaces to ease teething symptoms. The jury is still out on whether or not these necklaces work. It's best to speak with your child's doctor before using one. Strangulation is a real risk whenever you place anything around your baby's neck. For safety, remove the necklace before naps and bedtime.

Bruxism can also be caused by stress, especially in older children. If you suspect your child's tooth grinding has something to do with worries or anxiety, try to address those issues directly. A calming bedtime routine may help with nighttime grinding.

If your baby continues grinding their teeth throughout childhood, or develops pain or complications, check in with your dentist. There are special mouthguards that can be custom-fit to your child's teeth to prevent permanent tooth damage.

Get in contact with your pediatrician anytime you have a concern about your baby's health. Most tooth grinding is mild and doesn't have long-lasting effects. But be on the lookout for any changes in your baby's teeth.

Also report any irritability that might be a result of jaw pain, earache, or other soreness caused by clenching.

The sound and mental image of your baby's teeth grinding may be disturbing to you. But remember, it's probably a temporary condition that will go away on its own.

If you're still worried about your baby's teeth, make a dental appointment. Infants should have their first dental appointment when their first tooth appears, or at least by their first birthday. You can help protect your child's teeth by keeping up with regular appointments.

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It is natural to be concerned if you notice your child grinding their teeth in their sleep. This is called sleep bruxism, and studies estimate anywhere from 6% up to almost 50% of children. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov engage in bruxism during the night. Bruxism is believed to be more common in childhood. Trusted Source American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) AASM sets standards and promotes excellence in sleep medicine health care, education, and research. aasm.org and it can start as soon as the teeth grow in.

Grinding or clenching teeth may be an involuntary response to stress and anxiety. During sleep, adults and children may engage in teeth grinding without being fully aware. Trusted Source MSD Manuals First published in 1899 as a small reference book for physicians and pharmacists, the Manual grew in size and scope to become one of the most widely used comprehensive medical resources for professionals and consumers. msdmanuals.com they are doing it.

Bruxism is not considered dangerous in and of itself, but the constant grinding or clenching of teeth can cause jaw pain and damage to the teeth over time. We examine the causes and risks of sleep bruxism in children and discuss some strategies to prevent this nighttime habit.

What Is Bruxism?

Bruxism is the repetitive grinding or clenching of teeth. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov. There are two distinct types of bruxism: sleep bruxism and awake bruxism. Awake bruxism is believed to be more common and usually consists primarily of teeth clenching without grinding.

More than 80% of people with sleep bruxism may not realize they grind their teeth during sleep. It may be difficult to identify sleep bruxism in children unless they share a bedroom with a sibling or a caregiver.

Bruxism in children likely occurs due to a combination of psychological factors, family history, and environmental triggers. It runs in families, though it is not yet clear whether this is due to genetics or a third factor such as a similar upbringing. Studies have also found that male children are more likely to engage in bruxism. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov, although more research needs to be done to confirm this. People who are predisposed to bruxism may be triggered by one or more additional factors, such as stress or secondhand smoke.

Stress

Stress appears to be closely tied to sleep bruxism, though more research is needed to determine whether stress causes bruxism or vice versa. One study of toddlers found that those who faced stressful events were more likely to have sleep bruxism. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov . For school-age children, bruxism may be a way of coping with the stress. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov of homework, chores, and getting good grades.

Researchers have found higher levels of self-reported stress as well as stress-related hormones. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov in people with sleep bruxism, though additional studies have failed to replicate these findings. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov .

Anxiety

Though research is inconclusive. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov , there is some evidence of a link between anxiety levels and sleep bruxism in children. Children who are naturally restless and who worry more about doing well in school appear more likely to engage in bruxism.

Researchers note that symptoms may evolve over time as children develop, which may be why the connection is not evident at first glance. For example, toddlers who experience more severe separation anxiety. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov are more likely to develop sleep bruxism in elementary school.

Other Sleep and Mental Health Disorders

Along with stress and anxiety, bruxism seems to occur more in children with certain other conditions, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov or migraines. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov . Bruxism also goes hand in hand with sleep disturbances, including parasomias, snoring, and sleep-related breathing disorders. However, it is difficult to say whether these are a cause or an effect of teeth grinding at night.



Dental Issues

Bruxism is more common in children with misaligned teeth. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov and those who wear fixed orthodontic appliances. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov . However, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, there is not enough evidence to confirm dental issues as a cause of bruxism. Bruxism is also more common in people who breathe primarily through their mouth. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov .

Secondhand Smoke

Secondhand smoke is another risk factor. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov for developing bruxism in childhood. Research suggests that even moderate exposure to secondhand smoke. Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov increases the risk of bruxism in children.

What Are the Effects of Bruxism?

Bruxism can increase the risk. Trusted Source Medline Plus MedlinePlus is an online health information resource for patients and their families and friends. medlineplus.gov of developing:

- Fractured teeth, receding gums, and other problems in the teeth and jaw
- Temporomandibular joint disorder
- Eating disorders
- Mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety
- Sleep problems

The sounds produced by grinding and clenching teeth may also lead to sleep disruptions for your child or others in the bedroom.

Signs Your Child May Be Grinding Their Teeth at Night

Some common symptoms and signs your child might be experiencing teeth grinding during the night include:

- **Tooth Damage:** Check for fractures, wearing down of the teeth, or receding gums.
- **Sensitive Teeth:** Children who grind their teeth may be more sensitive to hot or cold food and drinks.
- **Jaw Pain or Headaches:** Constant pressure from clenched teeth may result in headaches, jaw pain, and occasionally clicking sounds or increased size of the jaw muscles.
- **Grinding Sounds:** Check on your child during the night and see if you can hear any grinding noises. You could also opt for a baby monitor if you are worried about disrupting their sleep.

Diagnosing Bruxism in Children

To be diagnosed with bruxism, your child must show tooth grinding sounds while asleep, coupled with corresponding tooth wear, morning jaw pain, headaches, and/or a locking jaw. These signs may be noticed by a dentist during a routine appointment, or they may be identified by a doctor if your child complains of morning pain or poor sleep. Since sleep bruxism occurs during the night, dentists rely heavily on parent reports of grinding or clenching noises during the child's sleep.

Your care provider may also ask about current stressors to obtain a fuller picture of potential precipitating factors. More rarely, they may refer your child for polysomnography, an overnight sleep exam, to check for signs of bruxism or other sleep disorders.

Treatments for Bruxism

Treating bruxism focuses on controlling damage to the teeth and reducing side effects such as pain and headaches. Improving sleep quality and addressing sources of stress may help make bruxism more manageable.

Nightguards

Your dentist can help fit your child with a nightguard or splint to protect your teeth while they sleep. The splint may fit over the top or bottom teeth, and may be designed to reposition the jaw in addition to shielding the teeth from friction. Nightguards and splints appear to be effective at treating bruxism Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov, although the bruxism may not fully go away and symptoms may return if your child does not use the splint.

Stress Relief

Managing stress may help reduce teeth grinding. Talk to your child about what may be occurring in their life that is causing them distress, such as a recent move or academic obligations. If necessary, reach out to a professional mental health professional or your child's school counselor for additional support.

Sleep Hygiene and Bedtime Routine

Sleep bruxism is closely tied to sleep quality. You can improve your child's sleep by ensuring your child's room is dark and quiet, limiting the time they spend on electronic media, and providing them with a nutritious diet low in added sugars Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.

Establishing a bedtime routine can set the stage for sleep and help your child feel confident and secure at bedtime. Some examples of soothing bedtime activities Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov are:

- Eating a nutritious snack before bed
- Brushing teeth
- Taking a warm bath
- Cuddling together with your child
- Reading stories
- Singing or soft music

Symptom Relief

Working on relaxing the face muscles during the day can sometimes reduce nighttime bruxism. To soothe painful jaws and teeth, use a cold or hot compress and encourage your child to drink water and avoid hard foods and chewing gum. Ask your doctor about stretching exercises and facial massage techniques.

Medication

There is some evidence that homeopathic remedies Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov or medication Trusted Source National Library of Medicine, Biotech Information The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov may help reduce sleep bruxism in children, but more research is needed into the efficacy and possible side effects. Always talk to your doctor before starting any new medication, even if it is marketed as natural or sold over the counter. As bruxism is not considered harmful apart from its secondary effects on the teeth and jaw, your doctor should weigh whether taking medication is worth the potential side effects.

When to Talk to Your Doctor or Dentist

Talk to your dentist or pediatrician if you notice symptoms of bruxism in your child, such as heightened mouth sensitivity, jaw pain, morning headaches, or grinding noises during the night or during naps. You should also consult a professional healthcare provider if your child is having trouble sleeping or showing signs of sleepiness during the day.

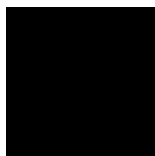
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Submitting your Answer...



Danielle Pacheco

Staff Writer

Danielle writes in-depth articles about sleep solutions and holds a psychology degree from the University of British Columbia.



Dr. Anis Rehman

Endocrinologist

MD

Dr. Rehman, M.D., is a board-certified physician in Internal Medicine as well as Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism

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What It Means When Toddlers Grind Their Teeth

If you have noticed your toddler grinding their teeth, you may be wondering if the behavior is normal. The unpleasant sound can cause concern, but usually, it's safe. Only in some cases do you have to step in.

Learn why toddlers grind their teeth and when you need to take action for your little one.

Verywell / Brianna Gilmartin

What Is Teeth Grinding?

Teeth grinding is known as bruxism by doctors and is very common in children. It occurs when a person presses their upper or lower jaw down on each other, moving the teeth against one another. Tooth grinding is not considered a disease, but certain other disorders may make it worse.

Grinding During Sleep

Tooth grinding during sleep is referred to as sleep-related bruxism.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), teeth grinding is especially common in children while they sleep, since during sleep the muscles of the jaw contract.

If those jaw contractions are too strong, it can cause grinding. It can be so loud that you can hear it, but most of the time, if it is happening during sleep, it is involuntary, meaning your child is not even aware that they are doing it.

Baby teeth grinding tends to occur most often during REM sleep, the second stage of sleep. Most of the time, a child who is grinding their teeth will not wake up during the grinding episode.

Some studies have shown that there are signs of disturbed sleep during grinding, such as an increased heart rate, called "micro-arousals."

That means that the child shows signs of stirring awake, although they do not fully awaken. Doctors aren't totally sure if the tooth grinding is a result of the arousal, or if the arousal happens because of the tooth grinding, so a lot of nighttime tooth grinding is still a mystery.

Severity

The severity of tooth grinding varies widely. Some children will experience minor episodes, with only a few instances of teeth grinding throughout the night, while others will experience severe bruxism and have hundreds of occurrences throughout the night.

As you can imagine, the more severe the tooth grinding and the more frequent the episodes occur, the higher the risk of damage to the teeth. Prolonged episodes of tooth grinding can cause dental damage as a result of the teeth wearing down.

Prevalence

The AAP notes that tooth grinding occurs in about 14% to 17% of children, and it can start very early in childhood, as soon as the upper and lower teeth have erupted through the gums.

Although the majority of children who grind their teeth tend to grow out of bruxism by around the age of six, around one-third of children will still continue the tooth grinding into adulthood. It's estimated that around 18% of adults between the ages of 18 and 29 experience bruxism and less than 6% experience it past the age of 60.

There doesn't seem to be any noticeable difference in teeth grinding among boys or girls and studies have shown conflicting results, but they do confirm that teeth grinding happens in both male and female children.

Signs

In most cases, parents will know that their toddler is grinding their teeth only by observing the child do it or by hearing it. The child, many times, is not even aware that they are doing it.

In some cases, a child will grind their teeth while awake too, and the parent or caregiver can help to redirect the child's attention from the behavior. There is a diagnostic tool called Bitestrip that can be used at home to help identify if sleep bruxism is occurring, but most of the time, that device is only used in adults or in severe cases.

Causes

Doctors aren't entirely sure what causes tooth grinding. It's likely that there are many factors that play into a child grinding their teeth.

The Dental Press Journal of Orthodontics explains that experts think that central nervous systems, the mouth, the sleep-wake cycle, genetics, and environment are all involved in tooth grinding.

In some cases, there is also a link between sleep disorders and teeth grinding, such as sleep apnea, although that's more common in adults. When a toddler's tooth grinding is occurring at night or during sleep, there may be no cause at all. For some children, however, tooth grinding can be caused by periods of stress or anxiety, such as a major life event or trauma.

Tooth grinding could also be the result of your child experiencing pain. For instance, if they are teething or have an ear infection, your baby may resort to grinding their teeth as a way to relieve the pain. Some children may also grind their teeth as a result of misalignment of their teeth.

Effects on Health

In most cases, teeth grinding is not dangerous. Because tooth grinding occurs in children under the age of six and tends to disappear as they get older, it will not cause any permanent damage because they don't yet have their adult teeth.

Every child is different and if you have any concerns or notice any breakdown in your child's teeth, you should speak to their doctor or dentist.

If your child has passed the age of six and is still showing signs of tooth grinding, you will also want to speak with a doctor or dentist to see what kind of options you have for preventing any long-term damage to their teeth and to figure out what (if anything) may be causing the tooth grinding.

Behavioral Effects

Some parents may be concerned about their children's tooth grinding habits based on limited reports that teeth grinding is associated with negative behavior in children. For example, in 2008, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) issued a release explaining that there is a link between teeth grinding in toddlers and problems with adjustment in school, as well as social withdrawal behaviors.

The parents reported in their surveys that the same children who exhibited teeth grinding at night also displayed problems adjusting to preschool, engaged less with their peers, and were more withdrawn in social settings. In the study, parents reported that 36.8% of pre-schoolers grinding their teeth one or more times per week, while 6.7% did it four or more times per week.

The AASM's findings were based on 1,956 preschoolers and discovered after the low-income parents in the study filled out a survey about their toddlers' behaviors, school performances, social abilities, and teeth grinding patterns.

Ultimately, however, the study did not find a cause-and-effect relationship between the teeth grinding and negative behavior—only that a relationship exists. The study also showed that the more teeth grinding that the parents reported, the higher incidence of the negative social behavior they reported as well, which means that there could be other factors involved.

A further 2006 study in Sleep found that tooth grinding was not associated with lower intelligence levels in children or any sign of acid reflux, but that teeth grinding did appear to have a link in some children with behavioral problems.

Specifically, 40% of the children in their study also had elevated scores on the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist. Higher scores on the checklist are associated with attention and behavior problems, and the more the teeth grinding seen, the higher the children's risk for attention and behavior problems seemed to be.

A study review by a dental journal also found that nighttime tooth grinding in children, under the age of 12 and most commonly around age 4, was also associated with some behavior irregularities, including hyperactivity, bad temper, and poor academic performance.

Physically, children who had nighttime tooth grinding were also more likely to have chronic medical conditions such as allergies, asthma, and upper respiratory tract infections.

Impact on Sleep

As you may have heard, a study reviewed with Wen Chen as the author found that chronic nighttime grinding

About 38 percent of children grind their teeth. The average age for starting the habit is around 3 1/2 years, and the average age for stopping is 6 – though, of course, people of all ages grind their teeth.

Your child is a bit more likely to grind her teeth if you do. She's also more likely to grind her teeth if she drools or talks in her sleep. Almost all teeth grinding happens at night, though some kids do it during the day, too.

Is teeth grinding bad for my child?

In most cases, teeth grinding sounds worse than it is. It's very likely that your child isn't doing any damage to his teeth and he'll soon outgrow the habit.

Mention your child's grinding to his dentist, though, so she can check his teeth for wear and any resulting problems, like pulp exposure, cavities, or fractures. Also have your child checked if he complains of pain in his face or jaw during the day, because this can be a result of zealous teeth grinding.

Can I do anything to help her stop?

Although the sound can be disconcerting, you'll probably just have to wait for your child to grow out of the habit. In the meantime, it won't hurt to work on a soothing bedtime routine – maybe a leisurely soak in the tub, a little back rub, soothing music, or extra cuddling in the rocking chair.

If your child is teething or has an ear infection, ask your doctor about giving her the proper dose of acetaminophen or (if she's 6 months or older) ibuprofen to ease the discomfort.

Some moms of babies report that they offer their little ones a pacifier when they start grinding their chicklets. (It may not stop the grinding, but they prefer listening to the squeak of a pacifier than teeth grinding together.)

Advertisement

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If there's a problem with the way your child's teeth are lining up, the dentist may be able to polish them to fit together better. Older children who grind regularly are sometimes fitted with a night guard – a plastic device fitted to the mouth to prevent clenching and grinding of the teeth during sleep. But your child's dentist probably won't consider this until your child has at least some permanent teeth, around age 5 or so.

6 month old grinding his teeth

My baby has started grinding his teeth, particularly when he's tired. He is only 6 months but he has already got 4 teeth (two front bottom, and two front top)

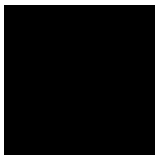
He only just got his top two on the 2nd Jan, so I don't know if maybe he's just 'testing' them out because they're 'new', but I'm worried he might damage them if he carries on...and the noise...it's the most cringeworthy sound ever!! 😬

Is this a normal phase babies go through? Or is it unusual? Did anyone else's babies do it? Could there be a reason for it?

Just wanted to pick your brains really.. Thanks.

(Oh and please don't redirect me to my birth board - I never post on there, and besides, most of their babies won't have teeth yet... haha)

Teeth Grinding in Children



If you walk past your child's bedroom at night and hear a loud, wince-inducing grating noise, she is probably grinding her teeth.

Teeth grinding is more common in children than you think. An estimated 3 out of 10 kids grind their teeth before reaching age 5. It's usually no cause for alarm, and most children outgrow it by the time they reach age 6. Most of the times, teeth grinding occurs because of teething or improper tooth alignment.

However, sometimes the teeth grinding can continue. If your child is older than 6 years and wakes up regularly with a sore jaw or is teased by sleepover friends or siblings who heard gnashing sounds at night, your child may have bruxism — the medical term for habitual grinding or clenching teeth.

Causes of teeth grinding

What causes teeth grinding, and what can you do to help?

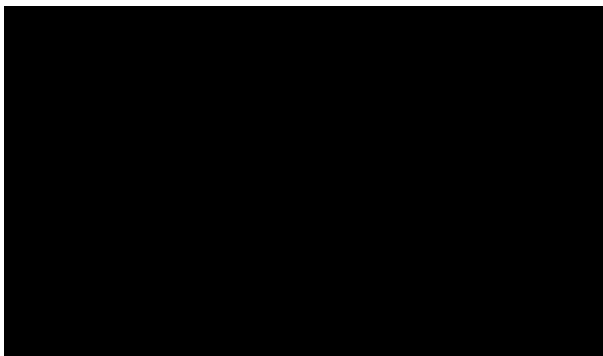
No one knows exactly why some kids grind their teeth. Stress can be a contributing factor – and while stress and anxiety can contribute to teeth grinding, there is no known connection between behavioral problems and bruxism.

What to do if your child is teeth grinding

If your child has a sore mouth or headaches from grinding his teeth, here are some helpful tips:

- Look for the source. Stress can make kids grind their teeth at night, whether it's thinking about upcoming exams or a problem with a teacher or the playground bully. Talk to your child to find out what's bothering him. Then help him find a solution to the problem.
- Rely on relaxation. Help your child develop a relaxing pre-bedtime routine. A warm shower, relaxing music, deep breaths or a peaceful book may help your child fall asleep in a more relaxed way.
- See the dentist. Your child's dentist can determine if the bruxism is affecting her teeth. A specially fitted mouth guard (similar to sports mouth guards) may be necessary.

When Should You Worry About Tooth Grinding - Dr. Jesse R. Witkoff



Occasionally parents will reach out to us because they've been alarmed by the sounds their children make while sleeping. It's not uncommon for children to grind their teeth, especially during sleep. In fact, some estimates put that number close to 33%. Tooth grinding, or bruxism, is most common when baby teeth begin to emerge and permanent teeth come in. And while it generally goes away, there are a few considerations you should be aware of.

What causes bruxism?

We aren't always 100% sure why children grind their teeth. Oral discomfort as teeth shift and realign may cause much of the temporary bruxism, as well as allergies and other minor illnesses. Bruxism may also be caused by minor changes in inner ear pressure, similar to what's experienced on an airplane. Ongoing teeth grinding may be more serious and can sometimes be the results of anxiety, stress or fear. While most children stop grinding their teeth over time, it's often important to look at your child's overall health as well as the frequency and severity of tooth grinding to determine if intervention is necessary.

When should parents worry about bruxism?

Again, bruxism is extremely common, and most children grow out of the habit. But as with any issue you are concerned with, please always feel free to reach out to us with your questions. The following list of symptoms are signs that

your child's teeth grinding may require additional investigation:

- If your child is having trouble sleeping or is waking frequently throughout the night
- Jaw pain or soreness
- Headaches
- Tooth sensitivity or pain not associated with other dental issues
- Teeth begin showing signs of wear
- Damage to the soft tissues of the mouth
- Loud, persistent grinding that doesn't seem to subside over time

What can parents do to help alleviate minor bruxism?

If your child occasionally grinds his or her teeth at night, and isn't showing any serious side effects like those mentioned above, you may try the following tips to reduce or eliminate bruxism without the intervention of a dentist:

- Work to identify and decrease your child's stress. Allow your child to talk openly about his or her feelings.
- Be sure your child is getting a proper diet
- Since dehydration may be linked to bruxism, be sure your child is drinking enough water

Of course, you should always make us aware of any issue involving your child's teeth. We can help you monitor them for any potential issues. Never hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or concerns you might have.