# How to Stop Grinding Your Teeth (Bruxism) | Core Dental

Canonical: https://www.coredental.com.au/how-can-i-stop-grinding-my-teeth/

## Details:

Bruxism is the technical term for grinding or clenching your upper and lower teeth together, either while you sleep, while you are awake, or both. There is no single way to stop it completely, but there are treatments and habits that can reduce its causes, effects and symptoms. At Core Dental your dentist can check for signs of bruxism at a regular check-up and, if needed, recommend a custom night guard and other steps to protect your teeth and ease your jaw.

## What is bruxism?

Bruxism is the habit of clenching or grinding the teeth. It can happen at night, when you are not aware of it, or during the day, often during moments of concentration or stress. Over time the constant pressure can wear down tooth surfaces, chip or crack teeth and fillings, and strain the jaw muscles and joints. Some people only learn they grind when a partner hears it or when their dentist notices wear at a check-up.

## What causes teeth grinding?

There is rarely one cause. Common contributors include:

stress and anxiety from life situations or disorders

intense concentration, such as when working at a desk or exercising

physical stress or chronic pain, such as neck or back pain

drugs and medications, including caffeine, alcohol and some stimulants

sleep disorders, such as sleep apnoea

malocclusion, which means the teeth or jaws do not meet evenly

Because the causes vary, the first step is working out which ones apply to you. In some cases, dealing with the underlying reason can help settle the habit.

## How do you know if you are grinding your teeth?

The signs of clenching and grinding are not always obvious. You may notice one or several of the following:

tight and tender jaw muscles

a generalised ache in the teeth

frequent tension headaches

earaches that have no other cause

You may also notice that your teeth feel jagged or sharp, or that your fillings chip or fall out. A partner may even tell you that the sound of grinding is keeping them awake. When you visit us for a check-up, your dentist will make a thorough assessment and look for signs of bruxism, such as flattened or worn

tooth surfaces.

## What can you do about teeth grinding?

Start by trying to find the underlying cause. The following can help:

stress management and relaxation techniques

cutting back on caffeine and alcohol

a sleep study to find out whether you have sleep apnoea or another sleep disorder

seeing a physiotherapist for treatment of sore or tight muscles

orthodontic work to correct misaligned teeth or jaws

You can also use some simple techniques to ease symptoms:

a heat pack on the sides of the face

gently massaging the jaw muscles

reducing chewing gum, which can further aggravate sore muscles

pain relief medication, if suitable for you, as advised by your pharmacist or doctor

None of these replaces an examination. If grinding is affecting your teeth, jaw or sleep, please book a visit so your dentist can advise on what suits you. You can also read our guide to ways to manage grinding teeth .

## What is a night guard, and how can it help?

Your dentist may recommend a custom-made night guard, also known as an occlusal splint. A night guard is made of rigid or soft plastic that you wear over either your upper or your lower teeth, depending on what your dentist judges suits you. It creates a cushion between the jaws, which helps protect your teeth from further wear and damage and can help the jaw muscles relax.

A night guard does not stop the grinding itself, but it can limit the damage. It is made to fit your teeth, so it differs from over-the-counter guards, and it needs to be cleaned and checked regularly. Our article on dental splints explains more about how they work and our guide on splints your dentist may recommend covers when one is suggested.

## When is jaw pain more than grinding?

Grinding and clenching can contribute to jaw pain, clicking or limited opening, which can also be signs of a temporomandibular joint (TMJ) problem. If you have ongoing jaw pain, locking or pain when you chew, tell your dentist. They can assess your jaw and bite and explain your options. See our articles on what causes TMJ pain and jaw pain .

## How can we help?

If you think you grind or clench your teeth, our team can examine your teeth, gums, jaw muscles and bite, take X-rays if they are clinically needed, and explain your options. Call 13 13 16 or book online at any of our nine clinics. We quote before treatment starts and offer interest-free payment plans, subject to eligibility. Figures published as at September 2026, confirm when you book. See our general dentistry page for the care we provide.

## Daytime clenching is a different habit, and a night splint does nothing for it

Most advice about grinding assumes it happens while you sleep. The published description is broader, and the distinction changes what will help you.

The Victorian Department of Health: "often it happens during sleep, but some people grind their teeth when they are awake." Among the symptoms it lists is one that is purely a daytime behaviour: "clenching the jaw when angry, anxious or concentrating."

That matters for a practical reason. A bite splint is worn at night. If your clenching happens at your desk, in traffic, or while concentrating, a night splint is not protecting you during the hours the clenching occurs. It may still be the right appliance for what happens overnight, but it is not an answer to a daytime habit, and nobody should let you believe it is.

Awake clenching also responds to different things, because you can notice it. Sleep grinding is, in the Department's words, "involuntary" — you cannot decide to stop something you are not awake for. Daytime clenching you can catch, and the Department's management list includes several approaches aimed at exactly that: "relaxation techniques", "stress management therapy" and "cognitive behaviour therapy".

So the first useful question is not which splint, but when: do your symptoms arrive on waking, or build through the day? The Department's symptom list is heavy with morning markers — "aching teeth, particularly just after waking up", "aching and/or stiffness of the face and temples just after waking up", "aching or stiffness in the jaws while chewing, particularly during breakfast". If none of those is yours and the ache arrives by mid-afternoon, that points towards clenching while awake, and the plan should look different.

Tell us which pattern fits. It is one of the few things you can observe that we cannot.

Source: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Teeth grinding, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (page reviewed 17 October 2025; accessed 4 November 2026).

## What the published management list actually offers

The honest answer to "how do I stop" is that the published advice does not promise stopping. It offers management, and it is worth seeing the list in full because only one item on it involves a dentist making something.

The Department of Health lists management of bruxism as: "stress management therapy", "relaxation techniques", "cognitive behaviour therapy", "hypnotherapy", "good sleep hygiene" and "regular exercise".

Separately, under treatment, it lists what a dental practitioner does: "repair of tooth damage", "ruling out other types of tooth wear such as erosion", "assessing risk factors including sleep disordered breathing", and the bite splint — about which it says that "in most cases, a bite splint will only help with the symptoms and will not stop you from grinding altogether".

Read those two lists together and the shape of it is clear. The dental side protects the teeth and rules things out. The behavioural side is where any reduction in the grinding itself is likely to come from, and five of its six items are not dental treatments at all.

That is not a reason to skip the dental part — damage already done still needs repairing, and erosion and sleep-disordered breathing genuinely need ruling out. But it does mean that a plan consisting only of an appliance is a partial plan, and if stress, sleep, alcohol, smoking or caffeine are in the picture — all of which the Department lists as risk factors — the appliance will not reach them.

Where we can help is the dental half, plus pointing you towards the rest: the Department's own "where to get help" list includes a psychologist for stress management and a physiotherapist alongside your

dentist. If grinding is affecting your sleep or your jaw persistently, a conversation with your GP is reasonable too, particularly if you snore.

Source: Better Health Channel (Victorian Department of Health), Teeth grinding, betterhealth.vic.gov.au (page reviewed 17 October 2025; accessed 4 November 2026).

## Frequently asked questions

### *Can teeth grinding be cured?*

There is no definitive way to eliminate teeth grinding completely, but the causes, effects and symptoms can often be reduced. Managing stress, reviewing caffeine and alcohol, treating any sleep disorder and wearing a night guard can all help. Your dentist can suggest a plan.

### *Does a night guard stop grinding?*

A night guard does not stop the habit, but it cushions the teeth and jaws so they are protected from wear and damage, and it can help relax the jaw muscles. Your dentist will make one that fits your teeth.

### *Should I see a dentist or a doctor about grinding?*

Start with your dentist, who can look for wear on your teeth and check your jaw and bite. If a sleep disorder, stress or chronic pain may be involved, your dentist might suggest you also see your doctor, a sleep specialist or a physiotherapist.

### *Can grinding damage my teeth and fillings?*

Yes. Repeated grinding and clenching can wear the biting surfaces, chip or crack teeth and loosen or break fillings and crowns. Early detection lets your dentist protect your teeth before the damage becomes extensive.

### *Do children grind their teeth?*

Some children grind their teeth, and it often settles by itself. If you are worried about wear on your child's teeth or sore jaws, mention it at their next dental visit so the dentist can check.

### *Do people grind their teeth while awake as well as asleep?*

Yes. The Victorian Department of Health notes that "often it happens during sleep, but some people grind their teeth when they are awake", and lists "clenching the jaw when angry, anxious or concentrating" among the symptoms. This matters because a night splint protects you overnight and not during a daytime habit.

### *How do I tell which pattern I have?*

By when the symptoms arrive. The Department's list is full of morning markers — aching teeth, and aching or stiffness of the face and temples, "just after waking up", and stiffness in the jaws "particularly during breakfast". Pain that is worst first thing points to something overnight; pain that builds through the day points to clenching while awake. Tell us which fits.

### *What does the published management advice include?*

Six things, only one of which is dental: "stress management therapy", "relaxation techniques", "cognitive behaviour therapy", "hypnotherapy", "good sleep hygiene" and "regular exercise". The Department's own "where to get help" list names a psychologist and a physiotherapist alongside your dentist.

### *So can grinding be stopped altogether?*

The published advice does not promise that. It offers management rather than a cure, and on the appliance it says that "in most cases, a bite splint will only help with the symptoms and will not stop you from grinding altogether". What a dentist contributes is repairing damage, ruling out other causes of tooth wear such as erosion, assessing risk factors including sleep-disordered breathing, and protecting the teeth.

### *Is an appliance on its own enough?*

Often not. The Department lists stress and anxiety, alcohol, smoking, caffeine, snoring, obstructive sleep apnoea and certain medications among the risk factors for grinding — none of which a splint reaches. A plan that is only an appliance is a partial plan, which is worth knowing before you are offered one.

## Related services and further reading

Ways to manage grinding teeth

What are dental splints and why would my dentist recommend them?

Which splint does my dentist recommend?

What causes TMJ pain and how is it treated?

What is causing my jaw pain?

Sleep dentistry

General dentistry

Dental check-ups

## Core Dental at a glance

Nine Core Dental clinics across Melbourne: Southbank, South Melbourne, Caroline Springs, Carrum Downs, Epping, Wyndham, Berwick, Bayside and Glenferrie.

Open six days a week: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm and Saturday mornings.

We quote before treatment starts, offer interest-free payment plans and claim from private health funds on-site with HICAPS.

Call 13 13 16 or book online.

## Contact Core Dental

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| Phone | 13 13 16 |
| Booking | Online via coredental.com.au, or call 13 13 16 |

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|---|---|
| Hours | Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 8.00am to 1.30pm (Bayside Saturday 8.30am to 1.30pm), Sunday closed |
| Clinics | Southbank , South Melbourne , Caroline Springs , Carrum Downs , Epping , Wyndham , Berwick , Bayside , Glenferrie |

Results, recovery times and potential risks vary for each individual. This information is general in nature and is intended for people over 18. Seek advice from a qualified, AHPRA-registered practitioner before proceeding.

### *What does the term bruxism mean?*

Bruxism is the clenching or grinding of the upper and lower teeth together, during sleep, while awake or both. Dentists at Core Dental check for signs of it, such as wear on the teeth, during regular check-ups.

### *What are common causes of teeth grinding?*

Common causes include stress and anxiety, intense concentration, physical stress or chronic pain, caffeine, alcohol and some medications, sleep disorders such as sleep apnoea, and teeth or jaws that do not meet evenly. Core Dental dentists help work out which apply to you.

### *What are the signs that I grind my teeth at night?*

Signs include tight or tender jaw muscles, aching teeth, frequent tension headaches, earaches, jagged or worn teeth, and fillings that chip or fall out. A partner may also hear the grinding. A Core Dental dentist can check for these at your visit.

### *Does Core Dental make custom night guards?*

Core Dental dentists can recommend a custom night guard, also called an occlusal splint, made of rigid or soft plastic to fit over your upper or lower teeth. It cushions the jaws and helps protect your teeth from wear.

### *Can a physiotherapist or sleep study help with grinding?*

They can. A physiotherapist may treat sore or tight jaw muscles, and a sleep study can show whether sleep apnoea or another sleep disorder is involved. Core Dental dentists can suggest these when your assessment points to them.

### *What self-care steps ease jaw pain from grinding?*

A heat pack on the sides of the face, gentle massage of the jaw muscles, less chewing gum, less caffeine and alcohol, and relaxation techniques can ease symptoms. Ask a Core Dental dentist if your pain continues or you notice tooth wear.

### *How do I book a grinding assessment at Core Dental?*

Call Core Dental on 13 13 16 or book online through coredental.com.au. Our team will arrange an examination of your teeth, jaw and bite at one of our nine clinics, with X-rays only where clinically

needed.