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# GUM SHIELD FOR TOOTH GRINDING

FOR DR. ROZE BIOHEALTH CLINICS | 01 DECEMBER 2022

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Mouth guards for teeth grinding are **retainer-like soft or hard plastic pieces that cover either the top or bottom set of teeth**. Nightguards are popular treatments for sleep bruxism. Nightguards cushion your teeth from the force of clenching and prevent the teeth from grinding together, preventing headaches, damaged teeth, and inflamed gums.

## 1/- When do you need a mouth guard for teeth grinding?

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- **You Chip a Tooth**

Not only will a **chipped tooth** require dental care for repair, but it can also be a sign that your teeth grinding has become more serious. As you touch your teeth together and grind back and forth, you can put a lot of pressure on the enamel — in your sleep, no less — that you could actually damage your teeth. This can be expensive to fix and can even lead to cavities, so it's best to talk to your dentist about a mouth guard before you chip more teeth.

- **You Have Chronic Grinding**

Some people grind periodically because of temporary issues, such as stress at work. If your bruxism is chronic, meaning you grind most nights, it's probably best to see your dentist about a mouth guard for teeth grinding. While it won't stop the actual clenching of your jaw, a mouth guard can minimize the negative effects on your teeth if you're grinding every night.

- **You Wake Up with a Headache**

Do you feel as though you have a raging headache every morning? It could be the result of nightly grinding. A mouth guard won't stop you from grinding altogether, but it may help. Talk to your dentist about what options are available to you. Relaxation exercises might help you wind down at night so that you'll be less likely to grind. Your dentist can suggest other ways to minimize teeth grinding.

- **You Have Temporomandibular Joint Disorder**

**Temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJD)** occurs when the muscles around the jaw become inflamed, which sometimes happens as the result of clenching the teeth together and grinding against the teeth. If your dentist diagnoses you with this disorder, ask about a mouth guard. A mouth guard will prevent your teeth from clenching and grinding, thus reducing some of the pain associated with TMJD.

- **You Take Antidepressants**

If you regularly take antidepressants, talk to your dentist about a mouth guard. A study published in a 2012 issue of *Clinics* found that paroxetine, the main ingredient in some antidepressants, can cause nighttime teeth grinding. If you take certain medicines, such as Paxil, you may need to protect your teeth against those side effects.

You can also talk to your doctor about adjusting your dosage or switching to another antidepressant if grinding becomes a problem.

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## 2/- What types of mouth guards do I need?

There are three types of mouth guards:

1. **Stock mouth protectors** are preformed and come ready to wear. They are inexpensive and can be bought at most sporting good stores and department stores. However, little can be done to adjust their fit, they are bulky, make breathing and talking difficult, and they provide little or no protection. Dentists do not recommend their use.
2. **Boil and bite mouth protectors** also can be bought at many sporting goods stores and may offer a better fit than stock mouth protectors. The "boil and bite" mouth guard is made from thermoplastic material. It is placed in hot water to soften, then placed in the mouth and shaped around the teeth using finger and tongue pressure.
3. **Custom-fitted mouth protectors** are individually designed and made in a dental office or a professional laboratory based on your dentist's instructions. First, your dentist will make an impression of your teeth and a mouth guard is then molded over the model using a special material. Due to the use of the special material and because of the extra time and work involved, this custom-made mouth guard is more expensive than the other types, but it provides the most comfort and protection.

Generally, mouth guards cover your upper teeth only, but in some instances (such as if you wear braces or another fixed dental appliance on your lower jaw), your dentist will make a mouth guard for the lower teeth as well. Your dentist can suggest the best mouth guard for you. An effective mouth guard should be comfortable, resist tears, be durable and easy to clean, and should not restrict your breathing or speech.

If you grind your teeth at night, a special mouth guard-type of dental appliance -- called a nocturnal bite plate or bite splint -- may be created to prevent tooth damage.

**Adults and children who grind their teeth at night should have a nocturnal bite plate or bite splint made to prevent tooth damage.**

### 3/- Can I Wear a Mouth Guard if I Wear Braces?

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Yes. Since an injury to the face could damage braces or other fixed appliances, a properly fitted mouth guard may be particularly important for people who wear braces or have fixed bridge work. Our specialist orthodontist can determine the mouth guard that will provide the best protection for your unique mouth work. An important reminder: do not wear any orthodontic retainers or other removable appliance during any contact sports or during any recreational activities that put your mouth at risk for injury. One exception is Invisalign trays, which can often be worn during sports sometimes along with a mouth guard.

### 4/- How Do I Care for My Mouth Guard?

- Rinse your mouth guard with cold water or with a mouth rinse before and after each use or clean it with a mild soap and a toothbrush.
- Clean the mouth guard in cool, soapy water and rinse it thoroughly.
- Place the mouth guard in a firm, perforated container to store or transport it. This permits air circulation and helps to prevent damage. If the mouth guard is acrylic, keep it in fresh clean water.
- Protect the mouth guard from high temperatures -- such as hot water, hot surfaces, or direct sunlight -- to minimize distorting its shape.
- Occasionally check the mouth guard for general wear. If you find holes or tears in it or if it becomes loose or causes discomfort, replace it.
- Bring the mouth guard to each regularly scheduled dental visit to have your dentist exam it.

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