

Bruxism in Children

Bruxism is a condition in which children grind or clench their teeth while they sleep. Anxiety, frustration, and stress can trigger the condition in children. Most cases of bruxism are considered to be harmless and disappear over time. Several treatment options are available for more severe forms of bruxism.

The Facts

- Up to 15 percent of children are affected by bruxism. Children under the age of 5 are more prone to developing the condition than older children. In many cases, children outgrow bruxism by the time they are 10 years of age. Children tend to suffer from bruxism during the deeper periods of sleep. Bruxism occurs frequently in children who have misaligned teeth.

Causes

- There does not appear to be a direct cause of bruxism in young children. Children who were upset or angry about events that took place during the day may show signs of bruxism while they sleep. Bruxism can also be a response to pain that the [child](#) may be feeling. Babies who are teething may develop the condition. Children who struggle with hyperactivity may be more prone to developing bruxism.

Effects

- Many children are unaware of their teeth grinding or clenching habits. Many children experience bruxism without any negative effects. Children who develop more serious bruxism can end up with chipped and sensitive teeth. Bruxism can also lead to the erosion of enamel on the teeth. In cases where a child suffers from chronic bruxism, temporomandibular joint disease (TMJ) can develop.

Diagnosis

- Children experiencing bruxism may complain of a sore jaw when they first awake. Fingernail biting or biting on objects such as pencils can also be symptoms of bruxism. Children affected by this condition commonly chew on the insides of their cheeks.

Treatment

- Treatment may be unnecessary as children generally outgrow bruxism. In a more severe case, the child may need to wear a mouth guard. The mouth guard is molded into the shape of the child's teeth and worn throughout the night. Although the guards can be effective, children may have difficulty adjusting to them. Stress reduction therapy is also utilized to prevent bruxism from reoccurring. A child affected by bruxism should see a dentist on a regular basis for evaluation.