



# Healthy Smiles for a Healthy Lifestyle

By Dr. Jeff Haddad

## Is your Nighttime Grinding telling You Something about your Sleep?

Conditions that affect a person's sleep can impact their overall health. More than 70 million Americans suffer from problems with sleep. In addition, 25% of our population clench or grind their teeth to the point of destructiveness. With new advances and improvement in technology, more knowledge is gained in identifying sleep disorder risk factors. The latest research indicates that nighttime grinding, also known as bruxism, could actually be a defense mechanism for people suffering from a sleep apnea. Not only could teeth grinding be a red flag for people to get evaluated for a sleep disorder, it may also be a reason for them to seek treatment for this deadly condition.

Sleep apnea is a disorder characterized by repeated cessation of breathing for brief periods during sleep. The most common form is called obstructive sleep apnea. This condition is attributed to excessive relaxation of the muscles at the back of the throat during sleep, which may obstruct the upper airway either partially (hypopnea) or completely (apnea) a dozen to hundreds of times a night. Your brain and heart don't receive enough oxygen as a result of OSA. This generally leads to several other systemic conditions.

### How Sleep Apnea Can Affect your Overall Health

- Increased blood pressure and heart rate
- Greater risk of heart attack and stroke
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Obesity.

Additionally, studies show that almost all people unconsciously grind or clench their teeth now and then and that more than 80 percent of all bruxers (people who grind or clench teeth) are either unaware of their habit or ashamed of it. Most people think that grinding your teeth is just an indication of stress, however, this may actually be your body attempting to prevent airway collapse and save your life! Recent research has demonstrated that nighttime bruxism reduces the negative pressures of the upper airway, decreasing airway obstructions.

### Symptoms of sleep apnea

- Breathing cessation interrupted by loud, abrupt bursts of snoring or snorting.
- Excessive daytime sleepiness.
- Morning headaches

- Dry mouth.
- Difficulty concentrating; memory loss; personality changes.

If you do exhibit any of these symptoms, or have been told you grind your teeth at night at anytime in your life, please get evaluated by your physician or a dentist that is trained in sleep dentistry. At our office, we utilize home screening technology that we give to our patients complimentary in order to identify any possible sleep disorders. If our patients exhibit any measurements of sleep apnea, we refer them to a sleep center for a true sleep study. At that time, the proper treatment protocol will be recommended.

### Sleep Apnea Treatment Choices

- A device known as continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) may be prescribed. With CPAP, a mask is worn over the nose; air is forced through the mask throughout the night to keep the throat open. It is considered the golden standard in sleep apnea treatment.
- A custom dental appliance that opens the airway and reduces snoring. These innovative appliances are very comfortable and are recommended when a person is CPAP intolerant.
- Surgery can help improve breathing in some cases. Anatomical obstruction in the back of the throat may be corrected.

When comparing CPAP to oral appliances, particularly in mild to moderate cases, Dr. Farah, a sleep physician in Dallas, Tx, works with patients to find the right option. "Patients probably have a preference for oral appliances in the mild to moderate range," he notes. "I always give the option, and oral appliances can be a good first-line option in mild to moderate cases. Sometimes I recommend oral appliances even in severe cases, usually when patients have failed in the past with CPAP. Some treatment is better than no treatment. If the patient can't tolerate CPAP, then an oral appliance can make an improvement." If we honestly have the patients' best interests in mind, we will educate them about all of the different therapies, and we will find what is best for each patient."

For more information, please visit [www.detroitssleepapnea.com](http://www.detroitssleepapnea.com). Or for a free evaluation with our sleep monitoring equipment, please call (248) 656-2020.



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