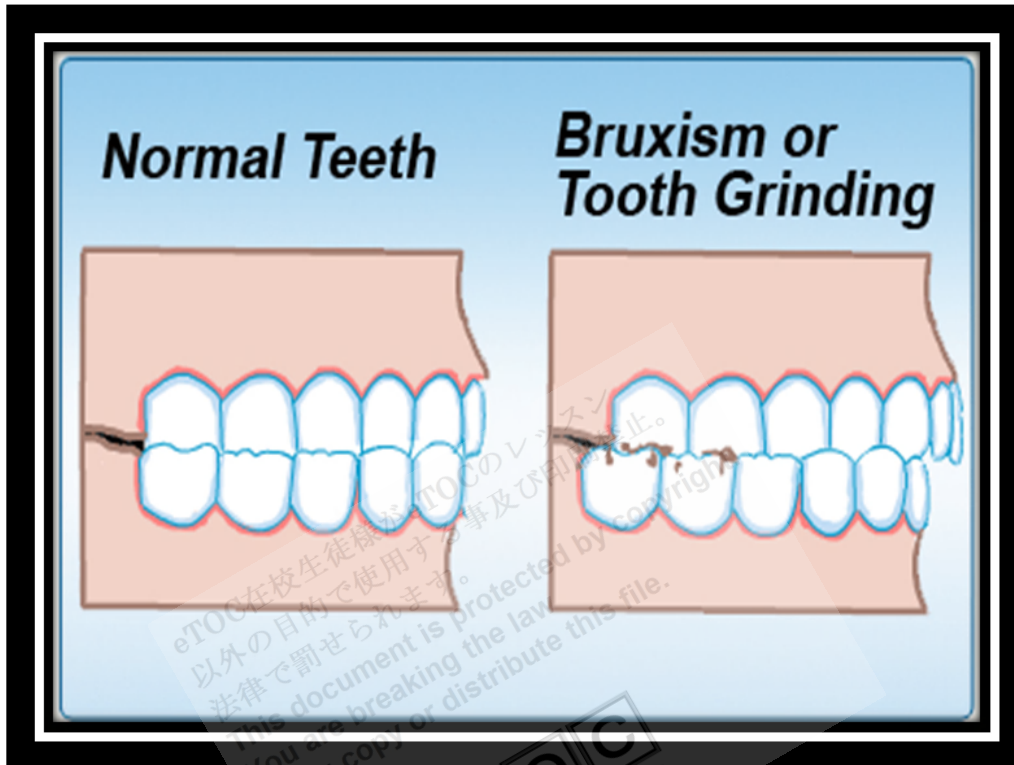


Symptoms of Dental and Oral Disorders

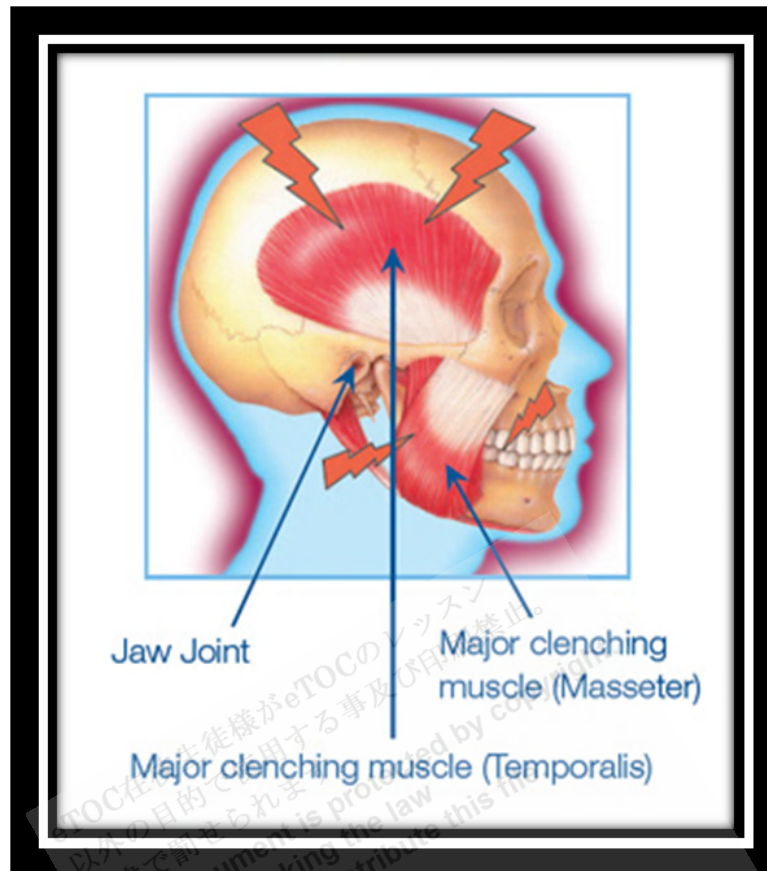
Bruxism



<http://www.medindia.net/patients/patientinfo/sleep/images/Bruxism.gif>

Bruxism is **clenching** or grinding of teeth. Bruxism can **abrade** and eventually wear down enamel and dentin in the crowns of teeth, damage metal or ceramic dental crowns, and cause teeth to become mobile. Tooth abrasion and erosion is often worse in patients who also have **gastroesophageal** reflux disease (GERD) and/or obstructive sleep apnea. A bruxism triad has been described, consisting of arousal-induced tooth grinding, airway-associated sleep disorders, and sleep-related GERD.

In some people, bruxism causes headaches, neck pain, and/or jaw pain. The most severe and extensive grinding and clenching occurs during sleep, so the person may be oblivious to it, but family members might notice.



<http://www.rivertowndentalcare.com/files/2013/01/clenchingmuscles.jpg>

Treatment requires that the patient consciously try to reduce bruxism while awake. Plastic oral appliances (night guards) that prevent **occlusal** contact by fitting between the teeth can be used while sleeping. When symptoms are severe, a guard can also be used during the day. Usually, such devices are custom-made and fitted by dentists. However, if the only problem is tooth wear, OTC heat-moldable devices fitted at home are available, but a dental evaluation should first be done to assess the severity of wear and determine whether an OTC device is adequate. Mild anxiolytics, particularly **benzodiazepines**, may help until a night guard is available but should not be used for extended periods.