

# Understanding Tooth Wear and Night-Time Grinding

Why your teeth are wearing down, how it can connect to your sleep, and the ways we can protect them.

Prepared for \_\_\_\_\_ • by \_\_\_\_\_ • date \_\_\_\_\_

## — WHAT WE FOUND

Here is what we noticed when we looked in your mouth today. None of this is meant to worry you. It is simply the story your teeth are telling us. **Your dentist will tick the signs that apply to you.**

- The enamel, the hard outer layer of your teeth, has worn down over many years, and the softer yellowish layer underneath (the dentine) is starting to show through.
- The biting edges of some teeth look flattened or shortened, rather than keeping their natural shape.
- There are small chips or fine cracks in the enamel from the extra load.
- There is a pale, ridged line along the inside of your cheeks, a sign your cheeks are being bitten.
- The edges along the sides of your tongue look slightly scalloped or ridged.
- Some teeth have become more sensitive to hot, cold or sweet, which fits with the dentine being more exposed.
- The muscles around your jaw feel tight or tender, and you may notice this more first thing in the morning.
- You have mentioned waking with a dull headache or tension around your temples.
- Someone close to you has noticed snoring, or pauses in your breathing, while you sleep.
- You often wake feeling less refreshed than you would like, or feel tired through the day.
- You have mentioned a recent rise in your blood pressure. Disturbed breathing during sleep can be a contributing factor, and it is worth having this diagnosed and managed with your doctor.

## — WHY THIS MATTERS

Enamel does not grow back. Once it wears away, the softer dentine underneath is exposed, and dentine wears far more quickly than enamel. That is why wear that has built up quietly over years can start to speed up, and why teeth can become more sensitive as it goes on.

For a lot of people, night-time grinding is closely tied to how they breathe while asleep. When the airway narrows during sleep and oxygen levels dip, the brain calls on the jaw muscles to tense and clench. Bringing those muscles in helps open the airway again. It is the body doing something protective, but the teeth take the wear in the process, which is often what we are seeing.

Because it is linked to breathing and sleep, this can matter for more than your teeth. Broken sleep and repeated dips in oxygen place extra load on the heart and circulation, and over time can contribute to higher blood pressure. Sleep itself is something your doctor looks after, so if this rings true we will suggest a chat with them alongside anything we do to protect your teeth.

## — WHAT WE RECOMMEND

Our recommendation is simple: **let's protect your teeth while the enamel you have is still there to protect.** Grinding is rarely an emergency, so there is no need to rush, but the wear only goes one way. There are a few ways we can do that, and they suit different situations. Your dentist will mark the one we would suggest for you, and we are happy to talk through any of them.

### A custom night splint

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

**What it is:** A slim, made-to-measure guard, moulded to fit your own teeth, that you wear while you sleep. It sits quietly between your upper and lower teeth through the night.

**What it does for you:** It places a hard-wearing layer between your teeth, so the grinding wears the guard rather than your enamel. Where snoring or disturbed sleep is part of your picture, there is a version designed to also hold your lower jaw gently forward, which helps keep the airway more open. Your dentist will guide which design suits you.

**Best if:** You want to protect your teeth from further wear. This is the right starting point for most people.

DENTIST'S NOTES

### A sleep assessment

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

**What it is:** Where snoring or disturbed breathing is part of your picture, a proper look at how you breathe while you sleep. This is usually a simple study you can do at home, arranged with your doctor or a sleep service.

**What it does for you:** It tells us whether your grinding is being driven by your breathing, so we can look after the cause and not only the symptom. If disturbed breathing is found, your doctor can guide the right care, and we can design your guard to suit.

**Best if:** Snoring, pauses in breathing, or waking unrefreshed are part of your picture and you would like to understand what is driving the grinding.

DENTIST'S NOTES

### Rebuilding worn teeth

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

**What it is:** Where wear is more advanced, gently restoring the shape and length of the affected teeth, for example with bonding or onlays, so they look and function closer to how they should.

**What it does for you:** It brings back lost tooth structure, can settle sensitivity from exposed dentine, and restores a more even bite and appearance. This is usually done together with a splint, so the new work is protected from the grinding that caused the wear.

**Best if:** The wear has gone far enough to affect how your teeth feel, function or look, and you would like to restore them rather than only hold the line.

DENTIST'S NOTES

## WHY ACT NOW

Acting now is the kindest thing you can do for your teeth, because the enamel you still have is worth protecting while it is there. A guard is a small, comfortable step, and starting sooner means less to restore down the track. There is no pressure to decide today, but if protecting your teeth is the goal, the best time to begin is whenever you feel ready.

## — WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

There is no obligation here. When you are ready, we will put together a full treatment plan for you. **The costs and finer detail come from us separately, printed for you,** so you can see exactly what is involved before you decide. Take this home, have a read, and let us know what you would like to do.

## — READ MORE



Teeth grinding and how a protective splint helps



Snoring, sleep and your teeth (sleep apnoea)



Sensitive teeth and worn enamel