

Hi team,

As you all know, I am in the dental field for last 15 years and currently enrolled in dental hygiene degree completion program. As part of the course assignment, I ought to choose a complex term related to my field and provide parenthetical, sentence and expanded form definition. The dental terminology can be incomprehensible and intriguing especially if you are not a professional in the dental field. The objective of this assignment is to define and explain the chosen complex term to the audience outside of the dental field.

Definition of Bruxism:

Parenthetical definition

Bruxism (teeth grinding) is an oral habit that can cause damage to the teeth and surrounding hard and soft tissues in the mouth.

Sentence definition

Bruxism is a subconscious, parafunctional and involuntary habit of grinding or clenching the teeth. It usually occurs in sleep and can adversely damage teeth, existing fillings on teeth and can even cause jaw disorders. It can occur in any age and can vary from occasional to regular and chronic episodes.

Expanded definition

What is bruxism?

Bruxism is a parafunctional habit of grinding teeth. It is considered parafunctional since it does not serve any function other than an abnormal one. Bruxism usually occurs in sleep, however, there are cases where people tend to grind their teeth while awake and working under immense stress. It is believed that stress and anxiety are predisposing factors for bruxism. It has also been noted that interferences in the normal bite after getting a new dental filling or a crown are also potential causes of bruxism.

Why is bruxism harmful?

Bruxism is usually harmless if it is occasional. However, if bruxism is chronic, it can cause irreversible damage to the teeth like, fracturing, loosening or even loss of teeth. In severe cases, it can wear teeth down to stumps. The most painful part is that severe bruxism can affect jaw joints and cause TMJ disorder which has to be treated by an oral surgeon.

How to tell if someone has bruxism ?

Grinding often occurs during sleep and most people are unaware that they grind their teeth. However, a dull, constant headache and sore jaw upon waking up is a telltale symptom of bruxism. Many times

people will learn from their loved ones who hear them grinding at night. People who visit their dentist regularly will be notified by the dentist or the dental hygienist about the obvious wear facets on the biting and chewing surface of teeth. A facet is a shiny, flat, worn spot on surface of a tooth.

How to treat bruxism ?

Bruxism can be treated using the following methods :

1. Eliminate the cause of psychological stress by modifying lifestyle and sleeping habits if bruxism is occasional.
2. Wear custom made night guard fabricated by a dental hygienist. A night guard protects the teeth from the powerful impact of grinding forces. Also, it will act as a cushion to deviate the grinding forces. Some people have to wear the night guard for lifetime.
3. Get a sleep test. Studies have discovered a strong link between bruxism and sleep apnea. It has also been shown that treating sleep apnea can treat bruxism and vice versa.

Images of teeth affected by bruxism:



Images of night guard:



References:

1. Margaret Walsh, Michele Darby. *Dental Hygiene: Theory and Practice*. Elsevier Saunders-2015
2. Esther M. Wilkins. *Clinical Practice of the Dental Hygienist*, ninth edition.
3. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/bruxism>