

# HEALTHY LIVING

## Grinding the night away

By DR. SHELDON LAZIER

Researchers do not agree on the cause. Many say it is a way of relieving stress; some say it is the body's attempt to correct an uneven bite; others think it is a sleeping disorder, and still others feel that certain personalities are just pre-programmed to do it.

Whatever the cause, dentists do agree that up to 60 million North Americans are bruxing (that is, grinding or clenching) their teeth on a regular basis, and that number is

increasing.

Since most people who brux do it while sleeping, you may vigorously deny that you clench or grind. But don't dismiss the possibility so quickly if you get frequent headaches (at the forehead, temples or neck), stiffness in moving your jaw in the morning or while chewing, soreness or clicking of the jaw joints (in front of the ears), sensitivity to chewing or temperature

changes felt in several teeth, or cracked teeth and chipped fillings. These problems occur because, whether you are a noisy grinder or a quiet clencher, the forces that you can apply to your teeth and muscles can be tremendous.

If untreated, bruxism can lead to jaw pain and tooth loss. There are several possible treatments, but one of the simplest is wearing a snap-in mini-mouthguard at night

to protect your teeth and muscles.

If you think you have a problem developing, get it checked out by your dentist. Early treatment is easier, better and less expensive.

*Dr. Sheldon Lazier is a Family Dentist in downtown Stouffville. For further information or consultation, call (905) 642-7474*

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