

OCCLUSAL SPLINTS FOR TEMPOROMANDIBULAR DISORDERS BRUXISM, OR CLENCHING

1. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this therapy is to influence your lower jaw to function freely and without pain. Many situations cause the malfunction of your lower jaw. Examples are accidents, surgery, developmental defects, peculiar oral habits, many fillings placed over numerous years, naturally occurring malocclusion (poor bite), orthodontics, psychologic stress, clenching or bruxing (grinding teeth), and other conditions.
2. **RATIONALE:** You have received a plastic bite splint (occlusal splint). This treatment has been used for many years to keep the teeth, from contacting during chewing and to allow the lower jaw to return to a comfortable hinge position without interference and guidance from the teeth.
3. **WEARING SPLINT:**
 - a. **TEMPROMANDIBULAR DISORDERS:** If your condition is temporomandibular disorder, you should wear the splint at all times, unless directed otherwise. This directive includes during eating. If you remove the splint to eat, your treatment will not be as effective. Many fillings placed in your mouth over the years or other conditions have caused your teeth to meet in a position your jaws cannot tolerate. The splint eliminates tooth-to tooth contact. Your symptoms will gradually disappear while you are wearing the splint; and your natural teeth, bridges, and/or fillings will be adjusted by us to the new bite. This procedure is called *occlusal equilibration*. After equilibration, you will wear your splint only at night. Over a period of time, you will not wear the splint at all. The described treatment usually requires from a few weeks to several months.
 - b. **BRUXISM AND CLENCHING:** If your condition is bruxism (grinding of teeth) or clenching, you should wear your splint only at night when you cannot control your jaw movements. During the daytime, make sure your splint is placed in water to avoid warping.
4. **CLEANING SPLINT AND TEETH:** Food will accumulate around and under the splint. At least one time each day brush and floss your teeth very thoroughly. Brush and rinse the inside and outside of the splint, and then return it to your mouth. Dental decay can be stimulated if you are not careful about cleanliness of your mouth and splint. Fluoride containing rinses or gels are useful when placed in your splint once per day if you have a high dental-decay rate.
5. **WHEN THE SPLINT IS OUT OF MOUTH:** If the splint is out of your mouth for any reason, your teeth may not meet in harmony. This situation is to be expected because of muscle relaxation while you are wearing the splint. Occlusal equilibration will eliminate this improper meeting of the teeth (malocclusion). If the splint is out of your mouth, place it in a container of water to prevent it from warping. You may desire to soak it occasionally in one of the commercially available denture cleansers or to place a few drops of Clorox in a water solution for a soak.
6. Please call if you have any questions or difficulty.