



ZAHNER DENTAL

QUALITY FAMILY DENTAL CARE

## Occlusal Splints (Night Guards) for TMD, Bruxism, or Clenching

**Purpose:** the purpose of this therapy is to influence your lower jaw to function freely and without pain, and to protect your teeth from excessive wear. Many situations cause the malfunction of your lower jaw. Examples are accidents, surgery, developmental defects, oral habits, altered bite with fillings and crowns placed over many years, naturally occurring malocclusion (poor bite), orthodontics, psychological stress, clenching or bruxing (grinding teeth), or other conditions.

**Rationale:** Plastic bite splints, occlusal splints, and night guards are one and the same, and have been shown for many years to help these conditions by keeping the teeth from contacting when the jaws are closed. This allows the lower jaw to return to a comfortable hinge position without interference and guidance from the teeth. Splints also protect the teeth from physical wear and abrasion.

**Wearing the splint:** You should wear your splint at night when you cannot control your jaw movements. It will take a few days and in some cases a few weeks to get used to sleeping with it. If you are prone to clenching or grinding your teeth during the daytime—on your commute to work, for instance—it is OK to wear the splint then. Just be careful to clean your teeth with floss and fluoride toothpaste before using it, since the guard will trap cavity-causing food against your teeth. *The splint can cause dental decay if you don't clean your teeth and apply fluoride before using it.* A fluoride mouthrinse may be used after brushing and flossing if you have a high dental decay rate (it must say *fluoride anticavity mouthrinse* on the label).

**Cleaning the splint:** After use, rinse the splint under water and turn it upside down to air dry. Your splint may be cleaned periodically by brushing it gently with soap and water (dish soap is best). Do not use toothpaste—it has abrasive in it that will wear the plastic over time.

Please call our office at **860-870-9031** if you have pain from a splint that is too tight, if it is too loose, or if the bite is off and your teeth hurt after wearing it.

For more information, please visit us online at [www.zahnerdental.com](http://www.zahnerdental.com).