



RANGE BYTES

June—September 2009

Office Closures 3rd Quarter

June 19-June 22, 2009 Continuing Education

July 31-August 3, 2009 Continuing Education

August 20-August 24, 2009 Continuing Education

September 25-September 28, 2009 Continuing Education

OFFICE HOURS

TUESDAY—FRIDAY

7:00 am—3:30 pm

Please let us know of any information changes.

Cell phone number, address, or email address, insurance

Chewing Gum After Meals May Reduce Dental Decay

Research confirms that all factors studied, **xylitol** (sweetener in chewing gum) most likely inhibits the growth of *Streptococcus mutans*, the oral bacteria that causes cavities, according to Allen Otsuka, PhD. American adults have experienced cavities: 23 % suffer from untreated cavities, which can result in serious oral health problems including pain and eventual tooth loss. Experts recommend using xylitol immediately after meals and snacks to help reduce plaque and reduce contact time of sugar on teeth. Here are three tips to help reduce dental decay and promote a sugar free mouth.

1. Keep a toothbrush and tooth paste handy: children keep travel-size products in lockers or backpacks. Adults should keep a brush and paste at work.
2. Chew sugarless gum after meals or snacks when unable to brush.
3. Drink water throughout the day to help cleanse teeth.

Bruxism

What is Bruxism?

Bruxism is the technical term for grinding and clenching of the teeth that may cause facial pain. People who grind and clench their teeth, called bruxers, unintentionally bite down too hard at inappropriate times, such as in their sleep. In addition to grinding teeth, bruxers also may bite their fingernails, pencils and chew the inside of their cheek. People usually aren't diagnosed with bruxism until it is too late, as many people don't realize they have the habit. Others mistakenly believe that their teeth must touch at all times. About one in three people suffer from bruxism, which can easily be treated by a dentist.

What Are the Signs?

When a person has bruxism, the tips of the teeth look flat. Teeth are worn down so much that the enamel is rubbed off, exposing the inside of the tooth, which is called dentin. When exposed, dentin may cause the tooth to become sensitive. Bruxers may experience pain in their temporomandibular joint (TMJ), which may manifest as popping and clicking of the jaw. Tongue indentations are another sign of clenching.

Just because you're old enough to know better, it doesn't mean you will not pick up bad habits. Bruxism is a common, and usually unrecognized, nightly routine that often develops in adults. Bruxing is the involuntary gnashing or grinding of teeth. It's frequently done unconsciously while sleeping and is often associated with emotional stress.

"A common characteristic among bruxers is the tendency to deny doing it," says Academy of General Dentistry spokesperson William Kuttler, DDS, FAGD. Studies show that grinding can lead to crumbling teeth, chronic headaches and constant jaw pain. "The challenge for both dentists and patients is to get bruxers to recognize the habit before irreversible damage occurs," says Dr. Kuttler. Despite showing many symptoms, such as awakening with tired jaws and headaches or flattened teeth and tooth pain, many patients say, 'I would never do that'," according to Dr. Kuttler. "People should realize that bruxism is often simply a reaction to stress.

What Can be Done?

The objective of therapy is to get the bruxer to change behavior by learning how to rest the tongue, teeth and lips properly. When some people become aware of their problem, simply advising them to rest their tongue upward with teeth apart and lips shut may be enough to change their behavior and relieve discomfort. However, the dentist can make a plastic mouth appliance, such as a night guard, that's worn to absorb the force of biting. This appliance can prevent future damage to the teeth and helps change the patient's destructive behavior.

If teeth grinding is due to stress, a bruxer may be able to prevent the problem with counseling or strategies that promote relaxation, such as exercise and meditation.