

Occlusal Splint:

Today you received an occlusal splint. Other terms for this device include, “occlusal guard,” “night or bite guard” and “TMJ appliance.” The occlusal splint protects your teeth from the damaging effects of clenching, grinding and other occlusal or bite habits. It will also help your jaw joints (TMJ-Temporomandibular Joint) to heal and become stable and comfortable.

How to care for your Occlusal Splint:

- **Wear it all the time.** To be effective, the appliance must be worn 24 hours each day at the beginning. Take it out only to eat, brush and clean.
- **Insert and remove carefully.** Use downward pressure on the cheek side of your back teeth to remove the appliance for cleaning. The appliance fits snugly to prevent movement. You may have to experiment to find the easiest way to insert and remove the appliance.
- **Speech may be affected.** Your ability to make certain sounds such as the “s” and “th” sounds may be temporarily affected. With some practice you can overcome this minor inconvenience in a few days.
- **Avoid vigorous chewing.** The appliance makes it possible to close your jaws together without straining the joint. It also makes it very difficult to chew some foods without putting severe stress on the jaw joint. Therefore, eat only soft or prepared foods that do not require vigorous chewing. Remember, the objective of the splint is to relieve bite stresses.
- **Your jaw joint will change as it heals.** You may then notice that your lower teeth no longer fit properly against the appliance. When this occurs, healing stops and symptoms may reoccur. Periodic adjustments provide the greatest possible comfort and most rapid healing.
- **The appliance can be a diagnostic aid.** If you have permanent damage or habitually clench or grind your teeth, some or all of the symptoms may remain. In cases where the damage is reversible, the signs and symptoms will disappear.
- **Three months without changes generally indicates stability of the jaw joint.** This usually indicates that the muscles and bone have adapted and stabilized. At this time an analysis can reveal what will be required to establish a healthy bite relationship between the upper and lower teeth.