

## Health Advice

### Joint & bite problems

Occlusion is the study of the way in which teeth meet and interact when the jaws open and close. The upper and lower jaws are connected by a joint which is located just in front of the ear. This is the Temporomandibular joint (TMJ), it allows your muscles to open and close your mouth and chew from side to side. Some of the muscles move the jaw forwards, backwards, side to side, and other muscles attached to the neck, back and shoulder are involved in bracing the movements.

The way in which we bite together is governed by:

1. The jaw joint and muscles being in their most comfortable position.
2. The teeth biting together where they have the most contacts between upper and lower teeth.

Sometimes the jaws don't move in harmony; when this happens the jaws may slide and teeth grind until they can find a position where both the teeth and the jaws can be comfortable.

Sometimes we find that people clench their teeth together at times of stress, and occasionally grinding may be worse during sleep.

This clenching and grinding of the teeth can cause problems

1. Wearing down of teeth surfaces (especially obvious in front teeth)
2. Breaking/chipping of teeth or fillings.
3. Recurrent or unexplained headaches especially in temples.
4. Head, Neck & shoulder pain.
5. Tightness in jaw muscles.
6. Sensitive teeth.
7. Clicking or painful jaw joint.
8. Ridging on inside of cheek.
9. Sculpting & ridging of tongue.
10. Mobile teeth.
11. Gum recession.

If any of these problems sound familiar please ask your dentist to examine your jaws and bite to see if you have any occlusal problems.

Occlusal problems are common over 1 in 4 people suffer, but many of the symptoms either occur at night, or the signs go unrecognised.

Many people do not link headaches, neck shoulder pain to dental problems.

Definitive treatments are varied but the starting point is normally the provision of a bite guard, similar to a

sports mouth guard. These appliances help to accurately diagnose the problem and direct treatment in the most efficient way.