

OCCLUSAL SPLINT

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **SPLINT THERAPY.** The acrylic device in your mouth is a therapeutic splint. It will help your jaw joint (TMJ or temporomandibular joint) to heal and become more stable and comfortable.
2. **YOUR JAW JOINT WILL CHANGE AS IT HEALS.** As your jaw joint heals, it will change slightly. You may then notice that your lower teeth no longer fit perfectly against the splint. When this occurs, healing stops and symptoms often recur. Periodic adjustments will keep the splint in harmony with your jaw joint and will thus provide the greatest possible comfort and most rapid healing.
3. **THE SPLINT CAN BE A DIAGNOSTIC AID.** Some people have permanent damage in their jaw joints. Others have destructive habits that cause continual symptoms. If you already have permanent damage or if you 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 disappear as the jaw joint heals. Most people experience considerable healing within a few months.
4. **AFTER STABILIZATION, YOUR BITE CAN BE ADJUSTED.** You will wear the splint for at least 3 months after the joint is healed. This will allow the muscles and bone to adapt and stabilize in their proper healthy jaw joint. This may only require selective grinding on certain teeth. In some cases, teeth must be repositioned orthodontically in order to establish harmonious function. Often the tops (biting or occlusal surfaces) of some teeth must be altered with crowns or bridge work. In few cases, the jaw length must be corrected surgically. A careful analysis of the occlusion, after the jaw joint is stable, will determine what further treatment is necessary and appropriate.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **INSERT AND REMOVE CAREFULLY.** Use downward pressure on the cheek side of your back teeth to remove the splint for cleaning. The splint fits snugly to prevent movement. You may have to experiment to find the easiest way to insert and remove the splint.
2. **WEAR IT ALL THE TIME.** To be effective, the splint must be worn 24 hours each day. Take it out only to clean it.
3. **TEETH TENDERNESS.** Your upper teeth may become tender from being confined in the splint. The tenderness lasts 1-3 days and will not reoccur.

4. **INCREASE IN SALIVA.** You will notice an increase in saliva due to the extra material in your mouth. It does get better!!
5. **KEEPING YOUR SPLINT CLEAN.** Be sure to brush your splint with tooth past to keep it clean. Also, clean it daily in a denture soak solution. This is the only time you should remove your splint. Do not bite your teeth together trying to find your old bite position when the splint is out of the mouth.
6. **TALKING WITH THE SPLINT.** To get used to talking with your splint, sit down with a book and read out loud. Your tongue has to adjust to the extra material. Try to swallow and gain your composure before speaking, especially when answering the telephone. Speak a little more slowly and try to enunciate your words.
7. **NUTRITION AND DIET.** Eliminate caffeine from your diet. Limit sugar and white flour intake. Eat nutritious diet (whole grains, vegetables, fruit, etc.). Avoid vigorous chewing. While the splint makes it possible to close your teeth together without straining the joint, it also makes it very difficult to chew some foods without putting severe stress on the muscles and the joint. Therefore, eat only soft or prepared foods that do not require vigorous chewing. Remember, the objective of the splint is to let the joint rest so it can heal.
8. **EXERCISE.** Exercise regularly within your limits of physical ability. **DO NOT CLENCH** while exercising.
9. **RELAXATION.** Allow yourself 20 minutes of quiet time two times per day
10. **SLEEP.** Sleep on your back. Use 2 pillows under your knees if necessary to maintain position.
11. **SPLINT CARE.** Do not expose the splint to hot liquids. It can warp and change shape.

If you have any questions or problems, please feel free to call our office.