
WHAT IS OCCLUSAL DISEASE?

Occlusal Disease is a term used to describe **signs** observed on your teeth that are a result of tooth clenching and grinding (a habit referred to medically as Parafunction; i.e., abnormal function). The signs observed on individual teeth may include:

1. Advanced wear through the outer protective enamel layer.
 2. Rough, sharp, or small “chipping” of the edges of the upper and lower front teeth.
 3. Small “notches” at the gum-line of selected teeth. This can often be associated with gum recession and tooth sensitivity.
 4. Teeth with small fracture lines indicative of high stress
 5. Teeth or fillings with cracks or fractures without traumatic injury.
- Chewing hard foods, including ice, can damage teeth but will **not** display the same signs as Occlusal Disease.

Although a person with signs and/or symptoms of *Occlusal Disease* is at great risk for tooth destruction, the good news is that your dentist can now offer preventative treatment to avoid inevitable large dental expenses and possible tooth loss.

Unfortunately, like High Blood Pressure, *Occlusal Disease* often does not cause discomfort until advanced damage has occurred and thus leaves many people oblivious to the condition. Left untreated, *Occlusal Disease* can often lead to more than the above listed signs of damage. Some people will eventually develop **FACIAL PAIN** with symptoms including headaches, popping/locking jaw-joints and facial pain. **FACIAL PAIN** requires a more complicated treatment approach and in some cases surgical intervention is required.

Splint Therapy (a removable bite/retainer appliance) is often the initial treatment recommended by dentists to aid in diagnosis for the causes of *Occlusal Disease* and to determine appropriate treatment alternatives. It is often necessary to first address this condition; even before damaged teeth are restored, in order to prevent premature failure of the “new” dentistry and development of T.M.D. symptoms. With proper management of *Occlusal Disease*, you can expect to keep you teeth and gums healthy for a lifetime.