

## **SPLINT THERAPY AND YOUR OCCLUSAL APPLIANCE**

- Your **Occlusal Splint** is a diagnostic, repositioning, relaxing reversible appliance.
- The **Occlusal Splint** has been shown to help 70% to 90% of the people with your signs and symptoms; however, you must remember that the **Occlusal Splint** only sets up conditions for healing and that the body must heal and repair itself. Since the degree of healing and repair are individual characteristics, the relief of the signs and symptoms will vary from person to person. The usual length of time the occlusal splint is worn will vary from three to six months, possibly longer in some cases.
- The **Occlusal Splint** is made of hard, processed dental material, much like that of which Orthodontic Retainers are made. It is strong and durable, if you properly care for it. It should be cleaned well twice daily with toothpaste and toothbrush, or scrubbed with baking soda. Never leave your appliance in direct sunlight, or where it can become overheated. Protect your splint from pets (they will most definitely “eat” it or hide it).
- Your Splint should worn as directed by doctor, except when eating. You will notice when you first remove the occlusal splint from your mouth for eating or cleaning, that the teeth will contact differently. The teeth are actually interferences in this seated jaw joint path of closure; however, the jaw muscles will quickly modify their action and return to the original path of closure dictated by your teeth.
- Follow-up appointments (the modification phase) will be scheduled to modify your **Occlusal Splint** as your muscles and jaw joint heals and relaxes. We initially estimate the number of follow-up visits that will be needed in your particular case. Depending upon your symptoms and compliance, the number of follow-up visits may be increased.
- After **Occlusal Splint Therapy**, additional treatment may or may not be needed. This would include procedures such as Occlusal Equilibration, Restorative Dentistry (fillings, crowns, bridges, implants) or in some cases tooth movement (Orthodontics). If additional treatment is discussed, we will review the rationale for such, and the fees for that treatment for your specific situation.

If your Splint is lost, or broken, a replacement fee will be determined based upon your specific condition. In most cases, due to lab expenses, the replacement fee is the same as the initial fabrication fee.

## **HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR SPLINT**

This acrylic splint is designed to be tight and comfortable, and to act as a protective mechanism for the health of your teeth and joints, and/or to help alleviate Facial Pain. The appliance must be worn as directed in order for it to be effective.

You should clean the appliance each time you take it out of your mouth by brushing it thoroughly. ***Please do not wash your splint in hot water!!!*** Once a month (for about eight hours), you can soak the splint in a diluted bleach solution to keep it fresh. (1/3 tsp. Regular Clorox in your container filled with water). Remember, you must clean your teeth thoroughly prior to placing the appliance in your mouth. This step prevents decay and tissue irritation. Keep the appliance in the container supplied to you to: 1) Help eliminate loss and breakage 2) distortion and 3) use while traveling. Additionally, please keep your splint out of reach of your pets because they love to chew on them!

Every time you come to my office for a visit (cleanings or fillings), please bring the appliance with you so it can be checked and ultrasonically cleaned. If at any time the appliance feels too loose or the bite feels uncomfortable, please let our office know so that we can make any necessary corrections.

## **SPLINT THERAPY**

Because we have noticed that you have signs of ***OCCLUSAL DISEASE*** or you have reported symptoms associated with ***T.M.D.***, we are recommending that we enter a diagnostic phase of treatment to determine the reason(s) for these signs and symptoms. It is important for you to understand that if you are interested in treating this condition, Splint Therapy is the beginning process for us to determine your specific needs.

An ***OCCLUSAL SPLINT*** is **not** a simple “night-guard”. You may be familiar with or have heard of friends who use a night-guard to protect their teeth from the forces of clenching/grinding during their sleep. While such an appliance can be beneficial, current research and our own experiences have proven that it is often not wise to simply treat the symptoms, and not the cause, of these destructive habits. Our goal is provide you with a healthy, stable mouth and not to simply manage the habit while conditions continue to worsen. Our philosophy is to help our patients need us less as they get older, not to become more dependent and require more extensive dentistry in the future.

The Occlusal Splint appears very similar to a typical night-guard (an orthodontic retainer) yet its purpose is much different. Not only does it function to protect your teeth from the damaging forces of clenching and grinding, it also allows us to better analyze your bite relationship and determine its contribution to your signs and symptoms. This diagnostic phase of treatment allows us to offer treatment alternatives that are customized to your specific needs and this provides you an opportunity to understand the reasons for your condition. It is also a discovery process for us; we cannot know what the factors are that contribute to your situation until we complete Splint Therapy. We want our patients to play an integral part in the treatment decisions that will impact the future of their oral health.

Following Splint Therapy, a treatment that typically takes one to three months to accomplish, we will offer you the results of our analysis and provide you the best treatment recommendations should any exist. Our experience has shown that it is often best to first complete this phase of treatment, prior to any other needed dental restorations (urgencies excluded), so that future fillings and/or crowns will not contribute to or worsen the situation.

***Splint Therapy is rarely covered by any Dental Insurance.*** Their role is to assist you with only immediate problems, utilizing the least expensive alternatives (not necessarily the best), without consideration for continued deterioration of your oral health. Our mission is to *prevent* future dental needs, provide predictable quality dentistry and allow you to make decisions that impact your future dental needs. We have found this to be the most cost effective approach for all of your patients regardless of Dental Insurance restrictions.