

# Can a \$30 Bite Guard

# Really Work?



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**M**any people –more than you would imagine – clench and grind their teeth at night. The result is damage to the teeth, jaw muscles and jaw joints. Wearing a properly fitted dental bite guard is one of the best ways to protect teeth from damage. But often, the high cost of a custom-made bite guard is the main reason people may allow the damage to continue. Many patients have asked me about using athletic mouth guards instead of a custom-made bite guard. My answer has always been, “Try it and let me know.” For most people the athletic boil and bite actually makes them clench more, and they find that instead of getting rid of discomfort it actually gets worse. There are some products that claim to be made for use as a night guard but most of them are basically another version of the athletic mouth guard.

If your teeth are sensitive to cold drinks or if your jaw muscles feel tired in the morning, you may be grinding your teeth at night (called bruxism) or you may be clenching your teeth, which can be just as harmful. The damage may make your jaw feel stiff or you may have difficulty opening your mouth wide. People with nighttime grinding habits may wear away their tooth enamel ten times faster than those without such abusive habits. Eventually, the teeth may be worn down and destroyed.

In addition to relieving head, neck, jaw joint and shoulder pains that are often associated with nighttime teeth grinding, treating bruxism and clenching is a lot more cost-effective than

fixing the damage. By ignoring the condition and exposing teeth to continued grinding, sufferers will often need crowns (caps), bridges, implants and dentures to repair or replace worn and damaged teeth.

For decades, dentists have been fitting patients with night guards to help protect the teeth and provide relief from grinding, bruxing or clenching. These custom night guards require professional expertise and can be expensive.

However, I have been pleasantly surprised by the good results my patients are getting using the DenTek™ Nightguard. This inexpensive alternative to a custom bite guard may be just the thing for some people to protect precious teeth and jaws. Its unique design allows it to be semi-custom-fitted by you in your own home. The appliance is placed in boiling water to make it malleable and then (with proper care to avoid scalding), set into place inside the mouth. Because of the unique design of the biting portion the DenTek™ can be shaped to fit any size mouth.

Of course the dentist-made appliances are designed to fit better for maximum comfort and they can be specially adjusted by the dentist to reduce muscle pain. In fact one of the most common bite guards we prescribe, called the NTI™, is the only appliance with FDA approval for treating migraine headaches – not something you can ever expect from the \$30 DenTek™. But for \$30, DenTek™ provides a wonderful low cost alternative, helping thousands of people save their teeth.