



Splint Therapy ©

The acrylic device in your mouth is a therapeutic splint. It has been designed to help your specific temporomandibular (TMD) symptoms. The purpose of the splint is both therapeutic and diagnostic.

Purpose

- Decrease symptoms (therapeutic)
- Increase chewing strength (therapeutic)
- Improve and stabilize muscle and jaw function (therapeutic)

Effects

- Eliminates the contact between the teeth of your upper and lower jaws...
- Thus creating a reduction in the clenching forces...
- Decreasing forces creates an environment in which, joint inflammation and muscle fatigue is reduced and the healing process begins.

Care

- Brush with a normal toothbrush/toothpaste.
- Clean with **cold** water only to avoid distortion.
- Soak for 30 minutes in denture cleaner or diluted vinegar solution periodically to remove odor and/or stains.
- Treat your appliance with care -----the splint is plastic and can break or chip.
- Do not heat/boil or modify the splint.
- When not wearing your splint, store it in your case with a moist paper towel or tissue; replace it daily to prevent bacteria build-up. You can soak it in mouthwash daily for fresh taste.
- Do not keep your splint in a glass of water as it will build up bacteria.
- Keep splints out of reach of pets.
- **The splint is your responsibility---loss or breakage will result in additional cost for replacement.**

Instructions for Wear

- **You will be given personal and specific instruction for splint wear.** If 24-hour wear is recommended, it needs to be taken out for breakfast, lunch and dinner and cleaning your teeth (approximately 3 hours per day).
- Insert and remove your appliance 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.
- Avoid vigorous chewing. Eat only soft or prepared foods that do not require vigorous chewing. Remember that the objective of the splint is to let the joint and muscles rest so they can heal. Our office will guide you through the program of splint appliance wear.

What to Expect

- Slightly sore teeth for a few days as the splint "settles" into position on the teeth.
- Slight speech change (usually temporary and minor).
- An urge to clench on the splint or "play" with it while it is in your mouth. This activity is counter productive since we need jaw relaxation.
- Symptoms will change gradually, and may follow an up and down pattern.
- As your jaw muscles are reprogrammed, you may then notice that your 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.

- Some people have permanent damage in their jaw joints while 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 symptoms may remain. In cases where damage is reversible, the signs and symptoms disappear.
- Most people experience considerable healing within months but it may take up to one year or more in some cases.
- Upon waking in the morning, you may find your teeth (“bite”) feel slightly “off”---this generally subsides within an hour or so after taking the appliance out.

Dietary suggestions---emphasize a soft “non-chew” diet

- Avoid sticky or tough foods (i.e., chewing gum, toffee, steak, bagels etc.).
- Avoid habits such as cheek and lip chewing, nail biting and chewing on pen caps.
- Avoid foods that require excessive opening of the mouth (i.e., subs, hamburgers and apples).
- Avoid eating hard, crunchy foods to prevent excessive stress on the jaw joints and muscles.

Occlusal splints are NOT:

- Orthodontic appliances that move teeth. You will probably notice changes in your natural bite which is the result of jaw re-alignment rather than dental changes.
- Intended for indefinite wear, unless to address nighttime tooth grinding/clenching (sleep bruxism). Once the problems are stabilized, further treatment suggestions, if any will be discussed.
- Intended as long term or a final solution. Remember---they are diagnostic for the doctor and therapeutic for the patient.
- A totally reversible form of therapy. Joint, jaw and dental changes can occur if a splint is worn on a long term basis. In these cases, the patient’s bite will probably require correction.

The fee charges at the time of the splint insertion include the cost of adjustments for either the first 6 or 12 months (case dependent). There will be a fee per appointment beyond the first 6 (12) months. IF you have any questions or are in discomfort, please contact the clinic as soon as possible.

