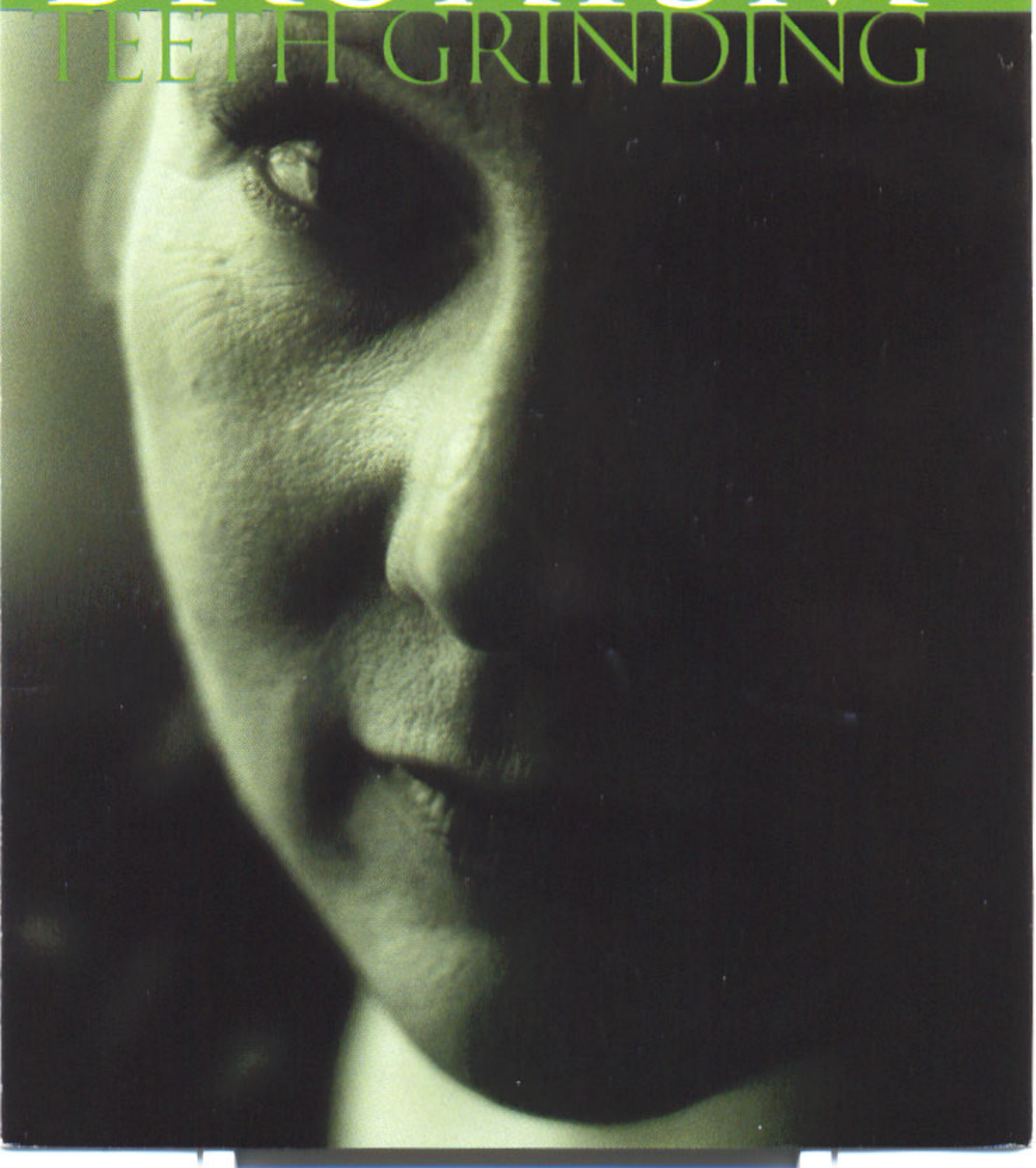


O R A L H E A L T H



BRUXISM

TEETH GRINDING



BRUXISM

About Bruxism

About 15 percent of people have a habit of grinding their teeth or clenching their jaws, a condition called bruxism. Most people do it in their sleep, so it often goes undetected until a family member hears the grinding sound or a dentist notices symptoms. If diagnosed early enough, bruxism can be treated before it causes damage to the teeth.

Causes of Teeth Grinding

In some cases, grinding occurs because the top and bottom teeth are not aligned properly. It may be a response to pain, such as an earache, or the result of a sleep disorder. Most often, bruxism is related to stress. Alcohol and caffeine intake can aggravate the condition, causing more severe grinding or clenching.

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GRINDING)

Effects of Bruxism

In many cases, bruxism doesn't cause any damage. But if the grinding is severe enough, it can:

- *Wear down tooth enamel*
- *Chip teeth*
- *Increase temperature sensitivity*
- *Erode gums and supporting bones*
- *Break fillings or other dental work*
- *Worsen temporomandibular joint (TMJ) dysfunction*
- *Result in cosmetic damage*

Symptoms to Look For

- *Teeth grinding, often very loud, during sleep*
- *Jaw pain, headache or earache*
- *Frequent contraction of muscles on the side of the face*
- *Sensitive teeth*
- *Teeth that look flat at the tips*
- *Abnormal alignment of teeth*

Teeth Grinding in Children

Bruxism is common in children. Three out of 10 kids grind or clench their teeth, usually before the age of 5. They may grind their teeth in response to jaw growth, losing or getting in new teeth, or the pain and discomfort of other ailments, like allergies or ear infections. As in adults, stress often contributes to bruxism in children. Teeth grinding is usually a passing phenomena in kids, and most outgrow it by the time they reach adolescence.

Treating Bruxism

When stress is the major cause of bruxism, relaxation methods like counseling or psychotherapy can dramatically reduce grinding. Other treatments may include muscle relaxants or physical therapy. Alcohol and caffeine should be avoided by anyone who suffers from bruxism.

When bruxism is serious enough to damage the teeth or cause jaw or facial pain, dentists can fit patients with plastic mouth guards to be worn at night,

designed to prevent grinding during sleep. In some cases, replacing an old crown or filling or filing down a high surface can change the bite and help eliminate pressure.

Self-Help Suggestions

- *Learn how to rest your tongue, teeth and lips properly with your tongue upward, teeth apart and lips shut*
- *Relax clenched muscles by massaging your face or holding a warm, moist washcloth to your cheek*
- *Avoid chewing gum*
- *Talk to your dentist about other steps you can take to relieve the discomfort of bruxism*

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Ask your Patterson Representative or
call 1-800-637-1140 (in U.S. only)