

TMD SERIES

# Occlusion

## What is occlusion?

Mother nature didn't provide all of us with a stable, healthy bite. Some people have bites that have been affected by wear, changed by dental restorations, or that have shifted with time.

A healthy bite allows all of your teeth to hit simultaneously and evenly when your jaw joint is seated into its proper position at the base of your skull. In this position, your chewing muscles are also contracting evenly. One way to test your bite is to shift your jaw to the side. Your canine teeth, or eye teeth, should be the only teeth hitting and should absorb all the lateral biting force.



Malocclusion



Jaw soreness



A healthy bite

## A "bad bite"

When you have a bad bite, also called a malocclusion, your teeth do not align properly. This can cause damage to your teeth and restorations, and it can also set off a cycle of muscle spasms, pain, and soreness commonly referred to as TMD, or temporomandibular disorder.

When the balance is lost among the bones, cartilage, and muscles of the temporomandibular joint, it can lead to:

- Headaches
- Earaches
- Difficulty in opening and closing the jaw
- Clicking or popping in the joint
- A dull, aching pain around the ear that spreads into the face
- Sore or painful jaw muscles

## Bite problems can cause bruxism and abfraction

A malocclusion can also cause a condition called bruxism, which is the clenching or grinding of the teeth that occurs primarily while sleeping. The symptoms of bruxism are worn teeth, notching at the gumline (called abfraction), as well as all of the symptoms associated with TMD.

Abfraction is the notching of teeth near or even under the gumline. When your bite is slightly off, undue stress is placed on the involved teeth and they begin to flex. This continual flexing and stress eventually cause the enamel to separate from the inner dentin layer, forming abfraction's characteristic notch at the gumline.

We can perform a complete bite evaluation, which will help us address any potential problems early in their development. Adjusting, realigning, or restoring teeth can prevent many future complications, and can help you gain optimal muscle balance and a comfortable bite.