

# Ask a Pankey Dentist



## What will a Bite Splint do for me?

*Answer Contributed By Roger A. Solow, D.D.S.*

*Dr. Solow is a member of the Visiting Faculty of The Pankey Institute for Advanced Dental Education. He practices dentistry in Mill Valley, CA.*

**T**he pattern of contacts where your upper and lower teeth come together is unique to you and called your "occlusion." A primary goal of Occlusal Bite Splint (OBS) Therapy is to protect your teeth and/or their restorations (such as crowns) by redistributing the forces of the upper and lower teeth coming together in contact. Another goal of OBS Therapy is to reduce the strain on jaw muscles and joints. An even bite on the OBS provides comfort by creating a harmonious relationship of the joints, muscles, and teeth.

Excessive force can lead to wear and breakdown of the teeth and negatively impact surrounding gum tissue, the masticatory muscles (opening and closing muscles of the mouth used in biting, chewing, swallowing, speaking, yawning, etc.), and the temporomandibular (jaw) joints ("TMJs").

Occlusal Bite Splint Therapy is one of the most effective things your dentist can do if you have symptoms associated with occlusal problems. Those symptoms include headaches such as migraines, unexplained loose teeth, worn teeth, chipped or cracked teeth or dental restorations, painful teeth, pain or soreness around the jaw joints, clicking or grating sounds in the jaw joints, limited jaw movement, and muscle pain of the face, neck, shoulders and/or back.

OBS therapy is a conservative, reversible treatment that is done, when possible, prior to more invasive treatment such as modifying the biting surfaces of your teeth or realigning your teeth through orthodontics. OBS Therapy is so effective that it has become an

integral component of comprehensive care for achieving occlusal stability and comfort.

A significant advantage of OBS Therapy is the learning experience it creates for both you and your dentist. As you wear your bite splint and as the bite splint is modified by your dentist to increasingly improve your comfort, you and your dentist get to try out the proposed occlusal correction and refine it before anything definitive is done on your teeth.

Your dentist not only helps you protect your teeth, muscles, gum tissue and joints, but also gets to verify the occlusal diagnosis and a proposed new occlusion that is best for you. While you wear your bite splint, your dentist will be evaluating such things as: Are muscles more comfortable when the traumatic occlusal interferences are removed? Is the range of mandibular motion improved? Can the temporomandibular joints (TMJs) tolerate (comfortably and easily function under) normal use? Are teeth less mobile or sensitive? Refining adjustments can be made on the bite splint during the period of therapy to work out the best occlusion for you.

If you wear the custom fabricated bite splint as directed, and give feedback during adjustment appointments until all details are corrected, it is common that your TMD pain and symptoms will be reduced or resolved. If they do not, this is indication of a more complex problem and your dentist may recommend TMJ imaging or involve a team of specialists. ■

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