

How to Treat Teeth Grinding Naturally and Effectively

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Bruxism affects 8.6% of adults and can exert up to 250 pounds of pressure at night, silently damaging your teeth, jaw, and sleep without you realizing it
- › Stress, sleep disorders, caffeine, and alcohol are major triggers of nighttime teeth grinding — addressing these root causes is more effective than just using a mouthguard
- › Foods rich in magnesium and anti-inflammatory nutrients like leafy greens and wild-caught fish help relax jaw muscles and reduce the stress response that drives bruxism
- › Jaw stretches, hot compresses, essential oils, and acupuncture directly release tension and retrain your nervous system to stop clenching and grinding
- › Daily meditation, deep breathing, and targeted yoga poses calm your nervous system, reduce anxiety, and physically unwind the facial tension behind teeth grinding

Did you know that while you're sleeping at night, your jaw can exert up to 250 pounds of force?¹ You may be unaware of it, but there's a chance you're unconsciously grinding your teeth as you slumber. Called bruxism, this is when a person involuntarily clenches their jaw and grinds and gnashes their teeth. According to a large population survey of more than 6,000 adults, about 8.6% report experiencing this problem regularly,² and it could also occur during childhood.³

There are many factors that trigger bruxism, and if you think it doesn't have any consequences, you'll be surprised — headaches, jaw soreness, facial pain, and tooth damage could all arise if you constantly gnash your teeth. The good news is, there are

ways to safely stop teeth grinding, without the need for expensive medications or invasive treatments.

Basic Facts About Bruxism

Bruxism happens in two forms — awake bruxism, which is often linked to stress or concentration, and sleep bruxism, which is often more difficult to manage because you're unaware it's happening.⁴ Sleep bruxism is the more serious of the two and is classified as a sleep-related movement disorder.

- **Most people don't even realize they have bruxism until the symptoms manifest —** Mild teeth grinding or clenching is usually harmless. However, if it occurs frequently or becomes severe, it leads to jaw pain, tightness, fatigue, or recurring headaches. Over time, this can also contribute to cracked, loosened, or, in severe cases, lost teeth. Eventually, these symptoms become too severe to ignore.⁵
- **There are many factors that can trigger this condition —** In most cases, nighttime bruxism is related to sleep disorders like sleep apnea, sleep paralysis, and restless leg syndrome. However, there are other triggers, such as:^{6,7}
 - Stress, anxiety, and nervousness
 - Substance use such as smoking, caffeine, and alcohol, which stimulate your jaw muscles
 - Medications like stimulants and antidepressants
 - Genetics
- **Teeth grinding is common in children as well —** In fact, research says that the condition is more common in childhood than adulthood, with around 5.9% to 49.6% of children having nighttime bruxism.⁸ It's believed to be related to the process of tooth development.⁹

Ignoring bruxism doesn't make it go away — it usually makes things worse. Over time, your teeth become so damaged that they'll need to be professionally repaired. You could also develop temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders, which cause chronic jaw pain and even limit your ability to open your mouth.

And let's not forget the ripple effect — poor sleep, chronic stress, and facial tension could all stem from long-term bruxism. That's why it's important to fix this condition right away.

Start with These Dietary Changes

You'll be surprised to know that what you eat has a direct impact on whether you grind your teeth at night. In fact, some practitioners believe diet may play a supporting role alongside the neurological and stress-related factors behind bruxism — if your body lacks key minerals or is overstimulated by certain foods and drinks, you may be more prone to clenching and grinding.^{10,11,12}

- **Avoiding eating hard and sticky foods** — Nuts, hard candies, popcorn, and even tough cuts of meat put additional strain on your jaw. When your muscles are already overworked from nighttime grinding, adding more mechanical stress during the day only compounds the issue. Sticky foods like peanut butter, nut butters, or certain candies like caramel create a similar problem — they prolong chewing and increase tension in the jaw.
- **Stay hydrated** — Dehydration causes dry mouth, which triggers teeth grinding, especially during sleep. Use thirst as a guide to how much water you need or check the color of your urine as a guide; if it is a deep, dark yellow then you likely are not drinking enough water, while a pale straw color or light yellow typically means you're sufficiently hydrated.
- **Cut the stimulants** — Caffeinated drinks and alcohol interrupt your sleep cycles and overexcite your nervous system. Consuming them — even several hours before bed — may increase nighttime jaw muscle activity in some people. Instead of having a

cup of coffee or a glass of wine, opt for herbal teas like chamomile or lavender, which are known to calm the nervous system and prepare your body for deep sleep.

- **Another option is golden milk** — While raw, grass fed milk is a great alternative for coffee or hot chocolate, consider taking it a notch higher by transforming it into golden milk. Essentially, this is plain milk enhanced with turmeric and other spices, like black pepper or cinnamon.

This combination works on two levels — the tryptophan in milk calms the nervous system, while turmeric has anti-inflammatory properties because of curcumin. Together, they ease your body into rest and may help support the kind of relaxation that can precede a calmer night's sleep.

- **Consume anti-inflammatory, antioxidant-rich foods** — Jaw inflammation from chronic stress and grinding is less likely to improve if your diet is high in processed foods and seed oils. Instead, opt for foods like berries and other fruits, cooked green vegetables, and wild-caught fish like salmon to support systemic healing. These ingredients may help reduce oxidative stress and support your nervous system into a calmer, less reactive state.

Optimizing Your Magnesium Levels Helps Ease Tension

Magnesium is a nutrient that's often overlooked, yet it is actually essential in more than 600 different chemical reactions in your body. It is well known for its role in muscle relaxation — when your magnesium levels drop too low, some of the initial signs include tight muscles, leg cramps, and restless sleep, all of which are associated with nighttime bruxism.

- **Magnesium helps relax the jaw** — It also improves sleep quality and lowers your body's stress response. There are also studies that associate vitamin D and calcium status, and separately, magnesium status, with an increased risk of teeth grinding.^{13,14}

- **There are healthy magnesium-rich foods you can add to your diet** — Some foods to consider include leafy green vegetables like kale, spinach, and broccoli, whole grains, and legumes.
- **However, these foods alone are not enough to correct the deficiency** — Modern farming practices strip minerals from the soil, meaning even magnesium-rich foods like leafy greens have significantly lower levels than they did 50 years ago. What's more, magnesium-rich foods like nuts and seeds, which many consume to boost their intake of this nutrient, are loaded with [linoleic acid \(LA\)](#), which research increasingly links to metabolic and inflammatory harm.
- **Consider supplementation** — However, there are different types of magnesium supplements on the market, and they all work differently. My preferences are magnesium glycinate and magnesium malate because they're well-absorbed and easy on your digestive system.
- **If you're dealing with stress, anxiety, or sleep problems, consider magnesium glycinate** — This form is bound to glycine, an amino acid that promotes relaxation. Magnesium glycinate is ideal for anyone who tends to be sensitive to supplements or who needs help unwinding and recovering at night. For more information on the different types of magnesium supplements, read "[6 Types of Magnesium and How They Improve Your Health.](#)"

Natural Remedies That Can Help with Bruxism

There are simple yet powerful remedies that will help resolve bruxism, as they help target the underlying causes. Since many cases of teeth grinding appear to be related to nervous system dysregulation, stress, or tension stored in the jaw, addressing those may help ease your symptoms.¹⁵

- **Stretch and reset your jaw muscles** — Jaw stretching exercises are one of the simplest and most overlooked tools, as they help retrain your jaw to stay relaxed rather than clenched. Try this method:¹⁶

1. Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth, against the back of your upper front teeth.
 2. Slowly open your mouth as wide as possible, keeping your tongue in place. Hold for five seconds.
 3. Closing your jaw while keeping the tongue in place. Hold for five seconds.
 4. Repeat the movement 10 to 15 times per session.
- **Apply a hot compress** — Heat helps relax your muscles, including your jaw. A hot towel compress, applied for 15 minutes on each side of your face, increases circulation and relaxes the facial muscles that tend to overfire during bruxism episodes. Do this before bedtime or during stressful moments throughout the day.
 - **Use essential oils** — The healing, calming, and stress-relieving effects of herbal oils have long been known in the field of alternative health. Different essential oils offer varying benefits, however, for muscle tension and stress relief, consider using lavender oil. Chamomile, cedarwood, peppermint, and bergamot oils also offer excellent calming properties. Consider diffusing them in the air or applying them directly on your pressure points (make sure to dilute them in a safe carrier oil).
 - **Rewire your nervous system with acupuncture** — For those who need a deeper intervention, this is a standout natural remedy. This ancient practice rooted in Chinese medicine works by stimulating points along the body that help rebalance your internal energy — particularly the parasympathetic nervous system. It targets areas that influence relaxation, helping ease the underlying tension.

Some people report that regular acupuncture sessions help lower stress, ease grinding episodes, and improve sleep quality, although rigorous research specific to bruxism is still limited.

Consider Yoga and Meditation to Help Solve Teeth Grinding

Bruxism is more than just a physical habit — it's also a sign that you're struggling with mental unrest. That's why mind-body techniques may play a valuable role in longer-term relief.^{17,18}

- **Mindfulness meditation helps interrupt the stress pathway** — It helps nurture your state of awareness and relaxation, so you'll be able to identify what's triggering your stress — and help you release it. Meditation also helps regulate your autonomic nervous system, which controls your involuntary habits, including grinding your teeth.
- **Practicing meditation doesn't need to be complicated** — Simply sit in a quiet space and focus on your breath or a simple phrase. When your mind wanders, gently return your attention. Some research suggests that even short, consistent sessions may help slow your heart rate, reduce cortisol levels, and support better sleep quality.
- **One highly effective variation is sound-based meditation** — Playing ocean waves, rainfall, or white noise while meditating helps calm your internal rhythms. These soothing tones support your transition into deeper states of relaxation before bed, making it harder for your body to slip into subconscious grinding patterns once you fall asleep.
- **Try deep breathing** — Taking slow, deep breaths shifts you out of fight-or-flight mode and into rest-and-digest mode. That's exactly what you need if your jaw feels tight or locked up from the day. Try this technique — inhale through your nose for four seconds, hold for four, then exhale through your mouth for six to eight seconds. Repeat this for five minutes before bed.
- **Yoga for physical and emotional release** — Certain poses like Child's Pose, Corpse Pose, and Downward-Facing Dog gently stretch your neck, jaw, and facial muscles — all of which tighten under stress. This kind of targeted stretching may help release stored tension that can contribute to bruxism.

- **Build a mindfulness routine that works** — If you're serious about stopping bruxism, mindfulness needs to be part of your daily rhythm. That might look like 10 minutes of breath-focused meditation in the morning, followed by a short yoga sequence in the evening. Or it might be as simple as a two-minute breathing reset before bed and a quick body scan when you wake up.

Maintain Optimal Oral Health

If you've dealt with teeth grinding for some time before you decide to take action, it's possible that there are already minor damages to your teeth. To prevent these from worsening, I recommend [practicing good oral hygiene](#) at home.

- **Practice healthy dental habits** — Regular brushing (using a nonfluoridated toothpaste), flossing and tongue scraping, along with getting regular cleanings with a mercury-free biological dentist, will go a long way toward keeping your teeth and gums healthy.
- **Consider oil pulling as well** — This is the practice of swishing oil around your mouth to "pull" and eliminate bacteria from your teeth and gums. This ancient technique is a valuable strategy to strengthen your oral health and help reduce the risk of tooth decay, bad breath, and bleeding gums.
- **Invest in a bite guard** — This oral device provides a barrier between your upper teeth and lower teeth. It helps cushion your mouth from the damage caused by bruxism.

Finally, seek help from a specialist if your teeth grinding has become severe. Consult with a mercury-free, biological dentist or a TMJ specialist who will guide you through other treatment options, so you can have more peaceful sleep at night.

This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult a qualified healthcare provider before making changes to your health regimen.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Teeth Grinding (Bruxism)

Q: What is bruxism and how do I know if I have it?

A: Bruxism is the involuntary grinding, clenching, or gnashing of teeth — often during sleep. You may not be aware it's happening until symptoms like jaw soreness, headaches, facial pain, or cracked teeth appear. Sleep bruxism is more damaging because it happens unconsciously and can exert up to 250 pounds of force during the night.

Q: What are the main causes of nighttime teeth grinding?

A: Bruxism can be triggered by stress, anxiety, sleep disorders (like sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome), substance use (such as alcohol, caffeine, or nicotine), certain medications, and even genetics. Over time, these triggers create tension in the jaw and nervous system, leading to habitual clenching or grinding.

Q: How can diet help reduce or eliminate bruxism?

A: Nutritional factors play a role. Magnesium-rich foods like leafy greens support muscle relaxation. Avoiding hard, sticky, or inflammatory foods, staying hydrated, and reducing stimulants like caffeine and alcohol can all help calm the nervous system and ease nighttime grinding. Anti-inflammatory options like berries, green veggies, and wild-caught fish also support recovery.

Q: Are there natural remedies that work to treat bruxism?

A: Techniques like jaw stretches, hot towel compresses, acupuncture, and essential oils (especially lavender and chamomile) may help reduce muscle tension and stress. These methods may help support a calmer, more relaxed nervous system.

Q: Can meditation and yoga really help with teeth grinding?

A: Possibly. Mindfulness meditation, deep breathing, and yoga are associated with a calmer autonomic nervous system, reduced stress hormones, and physical release of tension in the jaw, neck, and face. Regular practice may help shift the body toward a more restorative, relaxed state, which some people find helpful in reducing episodes of teeth grinding.

Sources and References

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