How Your Dentist Could Help With Migraine Treatment

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Dentist and Migraines

If you suffer from chronic headaches and migraines, have you talked to your dentist? Many headache symptoms and causes of craniofacial pain originate around the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) due to excessive strain placed on the joint and the surrounding tissues. Muscle fatigue caused by excessive clenching or grinding of the teeth will radiate throughout the muscles that span across the head, face, neck and shoulders.

Clenching and grinding are typically something that happens due to increased stress when concentrating or during sleep. If you wake up in the morning with a sore jaw and muscles around the jaw joint, then chances are that you're clenching and grinding during the night. Not only will this cause headaches, but it will also cause your teeth to wear down prematurely and even fracture existing restorations like fillings or crowns that otherwise have nothing wrong with them.

Visiting your dentist is a great way to find out if you're suffering from TMJ disorder or bruxism. An assessment of your jaw functioning and the muscles around it can screen for popping, grinding or enlargement of the muscles in that area due to overuse. Your dentist will also check for visible signs of wear caused by clenching and grinding. If your jaw ever pops out of the socket or becomes locked, be sure to let your dentist know.

How Splints May Help

If you are overusing your TMJ and grinding is evident, then your dentist will probably recommend the use of a bite splint. Splints are custom-fitted appliances that place the teeth and jaws in a resting position. This position prevents the muscles around the TMJ from being fully flexed and strained. It also prevents the teeth from wearing against one another, eliminating the risk of additional tooth wear.

Splints are small, comfortable to wear and can be worn during the workday or sleep. If you know, you're especially prone to headaches at certain times of the day (such as your long commute home after work each day) then pop in your splint. Can your sleeping partner hear you grinding your teeth during the night? Pop in your splint. Bite splints are an affordable, quick way to relieve the tension due to bruxism.

Some dentists also offer treatments such as Botox to help their patients manage craniofacial and TMJ pain. Not all dentists are licensed to administer Botox, so do your homework first before selecting a provider for this treatment. Not only is it useful for cosmetic purposes, but it's an effective way to prevent muscle overuse and strain.

Other Causes of Joint Strain and a Solution

Sometimes, simple misalignment of the teeth may cause joint strain. The way the teeth bite together can cause the jaw to be compromised and altered in its function to chew food effectively. In this case, orthodontic therapy can realign the teeth and correct the proper function of the TMJ.

In most cases, surgical TMJD treatments are reserved for only the most severe cases of the disorder. Typically, non-invasive therapeutic procedures like splints, braces, muscle relaxers or hot and cold compresses are put to use.