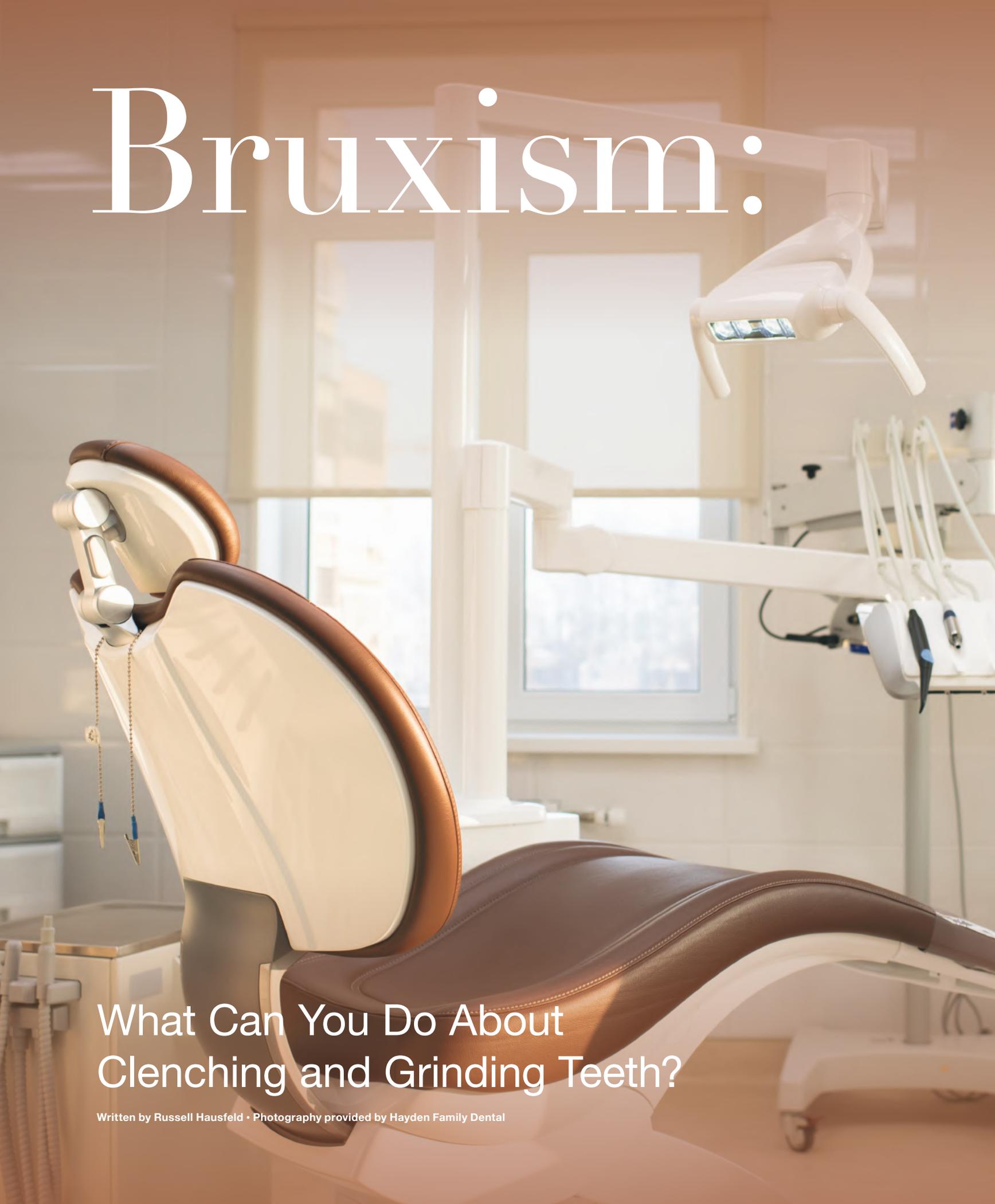


Bruxism:

A photograph of a dental office. In the foreground, a white dental chair with brown leather upholstery is visible. The chair is positioned in front of a large window with white blinds. To the right of the chair, a dental light fixture is mounted on a stand. The background shows a clean, modern dental clinic environment with white walls and a window looking out onto a cityscape.

What Can You Do About
Clenching and Grinding Teeth?

Written by Russell Hausfeld • Photography provided by Hayden Family Dental



Dental cosmetic issues range from a single damaged tooth which has discolored over time, to severe bruxism (tooth wear from excessive teeth grinding). Dr. Rebecca Hayden, of Hayden Family Dental, says that tooth wear is an issue she sees daily within her practice.

Many dental cosmetic concerns arise as people age and teeth begin to move, crowd, or space themselves out, she notes. This can cause teeth to look “old” from flattening of tooth structure which can also lead to more destruction of the surrounding teeth.

“As we age and wear the teeth down shorter, they will actually move and change position,” Hayden says. “If continual excessive force is applied from grinding or clenching teeth – which usually occurs at night time when we are sleeping and unaware of the damage that is happening – a patient can experience significant tooth damage as they age. Examples are tooth or filling fractures, nerve damage leading to root canal therapy, or even tooth loss.”

Most people, regardless of age, experience some period of time in their life when they are excessively clenching or grinding their teeth. This bruxism can be caused by stress, changes in life, or sleep-related problems like snoring and sleep apnea. As benign as a little clenching might seem, it can lead to intense muscle pain in the jaw, headaches, neck pain and an overall exhausted jaw.

Bruxism can upset your temporomandibular joint (TMJ), which connects your jawbone to your skull. The symptoms caused by bruxism can result in a temporomandibular disorder (TMD), causing pain in the jaw joints and muscles controlling jaw movement. Luckily, TMD can often be identified by dental professionals with a thorough exam.

“There are over-the-counter medications that can be recommended, massage of tight muscles or ice therapy,” Hayden says. “Sometimes a night guard is recommended. And, if sleep bruxism is identified, a sleep study may be advised to rule out sleep apnea.”

For patients who have gone without identifying potential patterns of bruxism and suffered excessive tooth damage and loss, Hayden says there is still hope. She treats many patients in collaboration with periodontists and orthodontists, who can help move teeth to proper alignments for implants and aesthetic crowns. These procedures can complete damaged smiles and successfully replace missing teeth.

These treatments bring Hayden the satisfaction she was looking for in a career. The most enjoyment she gets from being in the dental field is the ability to meet a patient and put together a customized plan that fits their oral health goals.



“Many times oral health, function and aesthetics all fuse together when coming up with the best treatment plan to help patients maintain their dentition throughout life,” Hayden says. “People are living longer – and, with all their teeth. So, comprehensive planning for the future now is the key to good dental health.” ❖

Hayden Family Dental is located at 9200 Montgomery Road, Building G, Suite 20, Cincinnati, OH 45242. For more information, call 513.791.4500 or visit www.haydenfamilydental.net