

Dentistry Marketplace

Free from the grind

Dentistry magazine takes a look at bruxism and how the company NoBrux aims to treat it



A view of the SleepRight adjustable night guard and its happy owner



The ease of use that the SleepRight adjustable night guard offers to bruxers will leave them smiling

Living with Kate was not much fun, at least not during the night. Student friends refused to share a tent with her when camping and boyfriends made a hasty retreat as soon as they heard Kate grinding her teeth. Luckily, one boyfriend, a fisherman who was used to sleeping next to the boat's engine on fishing trips, stayed around for a while, but the noise was unbearable, even for him.

Kate knew she had to do something. Not only was there the question of the noise from grinding teeth and friends who shunned her at night, but also damage to her teeth which was becoming a regular occurrence. Being a student with limited funds meant that a custom-fitted night guard was out of the question. She even balked at the £50 cost of a ready-made device from a specialist bruxism products supplier.

In the end, she decided to bite the bullet as well as her teeth and bought the SleepRight, a ready to use night guard, which uses adjustable technology from NoBrux, a company based in Fleet. The effect was immediate. Overnight the grinding noise stopped, her boyfriend stayed and they both had the best night's sleep ever!

Expert opinions

Experts are divided about the causes and treatment for bruxism, the formal name for teeth clenching and grinding. Stress is thought to be a major factor along with occlusal discrepancies. The debate continues, with some heavy-weight players taking a position. In one feature article in a national newspaper recently, it was reported that Roy Higgins, the chief executive of the British Society of Occlusal Studies had weighed in favour of occlusal discrepancies rather than stress as the major causal factor, whereas Professor David Bartlett of the Dental School of Kings College took a different view, favouring stress as being the predominant causal factor. Regardless of who wins the argument, awareness of bruxism and the effects on teeth and general health is higher in the US than the UK, although that does appear to be changing.

Phil Toye, a spokesman for NoBrux, a company recently set up to increase awareness of bruxism in the UK and provide products to help sufferers, said: 'It is interesting as we monitor enquiries and sales, just how many are from students and those employed in the financial sector. Also, the number of

customers in the republic of Ireland is proportionally higher than elsewhere in the British Isles. We think that this is because people are using the SleepRight product, finding it helpful and telling their friends. Word is getting round and with Ireland having smaller and closer knit communities, the word is spreading quicker than elsewhere.'

Phil adds: 'We have seen evidence of increased awareness of bruxism in the UK, since we started the company at the beginning of the year – people are becoming more aware of bruxism being a potential cause for their morning headaches, jaw pain and neck and shoulder stiffness and are looking for available solutions to help them deal with it.'

The company is the UK distributor of the SleepRight adjustable night guard, a ready to wear adjustable splint, which has been routinely offered to clients by thousands of dentists in the US as the first line of defence against chronic bruxism. The SleepRight and other products that help those who grind and clench their teeth (bruxers) at night are appearing in UK pharmacies and becoming available from specialist suppliers such as

NoBrux. Such devices have been popular in the US for many years and are starting to be in demand here. One type of night guard, often referred to as 'boil and bite' is now available and is targeted at the lower end of the market. It retails for about £20 the SleepRight retails at around £50 and is targeted as a mid range product for the end user and dental care professional. It is a ready-made device with adjustable technology, which allows it to be fitted in seconds. The partial coverage design of the bite pads follows years of study by the inventor and manufacturer who is also a specialist dentist and feedback from US customers. The device is generally regarded as the premier night guard in the US and is available in many major pharmacy stores there.

Home treatment

As well as the SleepRight, the company also offers an innovative 'home bruxism screener' and is targeting dental professionals as the potential market. Phil explains: 'Many people don't realise they suffer from bruxism and grind or clench their teeth. Although worn and damaged teeth may be an indication, until now, there

has been no way of knowing for certain, without an expensive and lengthy formal sleep study. Once the dental professional sees signs of tooth wear and asks the client if they suffer from bruxism, the next logical step is to provide them with the BiteStrip home bruxism screener. It is a small but high tech device that the client wears at night in the comfort of their home. In the morning, they get a reading from the device which they then hand to their dentist. It shows the extent of their bruxism on a scale, low to 1-3 severity.

'Having knowledge of the condition is not enough, there is often the risk of damage to expensive cosmetic or other restoration work taking place over several weeks. Chronic bruxers can easily damage work in progress, but fitting a custom bite guard may be impractical when teeth are still being moved. This is where the SleepRight can really help. It takes seconds to fit and the

client's teeth are protected immediately.

'The device can also be used during treatment to provide bilateral separation of the teeth, which is easier on the muscles and more comfortable for the client than a unilateral bite block. This stabilisation of the mandible and the TMJ reduces the stress on the muscle sling and averts unilateral joint compression or torquing of the mandible. The SleepRight adjustable bitepad technology allows the dentist to change the intra-oral access from small to wider openings. Once the procedure is completed, the bitepads are easily adjusted to the correct position as indicated in the instructions. And, at the end of the dental work, the dental professional and client can decide whether to fit the custom guard or keep the SleepRight.'

It sounds like bruxism is something we will all be hearing more of in the future, but, thankfully, nobody will be hearing any more grinding noises from Kate! ■

For more information take a look at the website: www.nobruX.co.uk or call on freephone 0800 612 2193.