



GIVE IT A REST: [Delta Dental of Illinois](#) Encourages Routine Dental Exams to Help Detect Nighttime Teeth Grinding

Lisle, Ill. (February 20, 2009) – During National Sleep Awareness Week — March 1-8 — [Delta Dental of Illinois](#) is promoting the importance of a good night's sleep by raising awareness a little-known effect of sleep deprivation: sleep bruxism.

Sleep bruxism is an unconscious grinding of teeth during sleep, commonly associated with sleep deprivation, stress or misalignment of teeth. Depending on its severity, the grinding may damage teeth and can cause pain and discomfort. Over time, teeth grinding wears down biting surfaces of teeth, and in chronic cases, can lead to fracturing, loosening or even loss of teeth.

"Since teeth grinding is an unconscious behavior, diagnosis can be tricky," said Dr. Katina Morelli, D.D.S., dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. "So how does a dentist know if a patient grinds in their sleep? The most common symptoms are dull headaches or earaches, soreness of jawbone or muscles and chipped or worn teeth. Often a sleep partner will hear the grinding and may even be kept awake."

If undiagnosed and untreated, teeth grinding can lead to more serious conditions, such as temporomandibular disorders (TMD) — characterized by intense jaw pain, locking or popping of the jaw joint and inability to open the mouth wide.

"Regular dental exams are the best way to detect teeth grinding," says Dr. Morelli. "It is much easier to find and correct the grinding problem than to fix a damaged tooth. I encourage all dentists to be aware of teeth grinding."

Fortunately, teeth grinding can be treated. The National Sleep Foundation suggests winding down before going to bed to give muscles time to fully relax. Applying a warm compress to jaw muscles before bed can also help. If necessary, a dentist can fit teeth grinders with a nighttime mouth guard to cushion teeth during sleep.

To find out more about teeth grinding, contact your dentist. Find a Delta Dental dentist by visiting www.deltadentalil.com and clicking on the "Dentist Search" link.

[Delta Dental of Illinois](#) (DDIL) is a not-for-profit dental service corporation specializing in providing comprehensive, easy-to-use and cost-effective benefits to 1.4 million employees and family members in more than 3,600 Illinois employee groups. Based in Lisle, Ill., DDIL offers an array of extensive nationwide network-based managed fee-for-service, PPO and dental HMO plans.

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