

Stress -- don't let it grind you down

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People who are stressed by daily problems or trouble at work seem to be more likely to grind their teeth at night. Researchers writing in BioMed Central's open access journal *Head & Face Medicine* studied the causes of 'sleep bruxism', gnashing teeth during the night, finding that it was especially common in those who try to cope with stress by escaping from difficult situations.

Maria Giraki, from Heinrich-Heine-University, Düsseldorf, Germany, worked with a team of researchers to study the condition in 69 people, of whom 48 were 'bruxers'. She said, "Bruxing can lead to abrasive tooth wear, looseness and sensitivity of [teeth](#), and growth and pain in the muscles responsible for chewing. Its causes are still relatively unknown, but [stress](#) has been implicated. We aimed to investigate whether different stress-factors, and different coping strategies, were more or less associated with these bruxism symptoms".

Tooth grinding was measured by thin plates that were placed in trial participants mouths' overnight, while stress and coping techniques were assessed by three questionnaires. Bruxing was not associated with age, sex or education level, but was more common in people who claimed to experience daily stress and trouble at work. Giraki adds, "Our data support the assumption that [people](#) with the most problematic grinding do not seem to be able to deal with stress in an adequate way. They seem to prefer negative coping strategies like 'escape'. This, in general, increases the feeling of stress, instead of looking at the stressor in a positive way".

More information: Correlation between stress, stress-coping and current sleep bruxism, Maria Giraki, Christine Schneider, Ralf Schäfer, Preeti Singh, Matthias Franz, Wolfgang H.-M Raab and Michelle A Ommerborn, Head & Face Medicine (in press), www.head-face-med.com/

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