

HELPFUL HINTS FOR WEARING THE MAPA

Taking Care of Your Bite Guard

Your bite guard is a very important part of your therapy. It must be worn properly to achieve full results. Attending dental therapy appointments is also important.

The MAPA is nearly invisible and speech is usually no problem after the 2nd day.

Initially, you should wear your bite guard **full time** except to eat or clean it. You may drink with it in place. Bedtime wear only usually begins after the second therapy visit, but your dentist will tell you when to begin bedtime wear "only". Speech and aesthetics are rarely problems. Long term wear will be established by your dentist, but many patients choose to wear this bite guard indefinitely at bedtime since most damage is done during sleep.

To clean the MAPA, soak it in Efferdent or Polident (15 minutes usually) or a similar product. Use cold or lukewarm water since hot water may warp it. Soaking longer should not harm the appliance. You may use mouth rinse for quick freshening. Do not use a toothbrush because it will scratch your bite guard.

Eating: When you take your bite guard out to eat, always put it back in the case to avoid losing it.

CAUTION: Dogs love bite guards.

Try not to purposely bite or play with your bite guard but human curiosity says you might for a day or so. Most people do not notice they are wearing it after 10 days.

The MAPA Establishes Your Best "Jaw Fit"

When you take your bite guard out to eat, you may find your teeth not fitting properly for a few minutes. You lose the memory of your best "teeth fit" momentarily. The bite guard is matched to your best "jaw fit" (muscles and TMJ fit). Part of your therapy will be creating a stable and physiologic bite and jaw relationship. This may be done by minor equilibrations or adjustments to your teeth as your muscles relax. The adjustments rarely exceed the width of a hair on any selected spot. You should not visually see the difference before and after the adjustments, but your muscles and nervous system will certainly appreciate the change (improved function and stability).

Bite Guard Therapy

The MAPA functions quite differently from most other bite guards. This is good because it works in harmony with your body. It is a true neuromuscular device. First of all, it is passive. It fits within your resting jaw space (when your lips are together and your teeth are apart). Jaw muscle contractions happen when your teeth touch something or each other, such as in clenching. The message for your muscles to flex is integrated into the proprioception nerves around the roots of your teeth. Like an electrical switch, if there is no (tooth) contact, there is no electrical flow. Muscles relax (are not contracted) and return to their normal working length as a result. Teeth that have been intruded or pushed laterally from clenching will have a chance to seek their neutral position (those not covered).

Orthopedic stability is achieved by muscle relaxation, your TMJ disc returning to proper position and by teeth returning to their normal unstrained position. Equilibration may be necessary to maintain neuromuscular function and harmony. Tooth adjustments occur on the sides and cuspal inclines of teeth and rarely on the vertical. In other words, your teeth are **not** “ground down” or made shorter.

Your Home Work

Proper posture when sitting, standing, or sleeping is very important. Sleeping on your stomach or with hands on your face with your neck twisted contributes to impingement of your airway and vertebral arteries. This can lead to lowered oxygen saturation which makes the brain irritable. This in turn can lead to bruxism. Lowered oxygen saturation to the brain accounts for much of our restless sleep. Restless sleep and vertebral artery (feeds the brain stem) impingement reduces the amount of serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine you produce. Thyroid levels can also be affected. TMD (TMJ) and sleep issues are highly associated. Avoid sleeping on your back if you are significantly overweight, have a large tongue, low soft palate or snore. Side sleeping with your head, neck and spine in a straight line is always good. Don't use a tall pillow for back sleeping.

Texting, holding phones, holding a steering wheel high, reading in bed on your stomach or side, working on computers and carrying heavy purses can devastate neck and shoulder muscles. Remember, most muscle tension type headaches come from the neck and shoulders. If you have trouble correcting bad posture or habits, place a band-aide on one of your fingers as a constant reminder to break the habit. It takes 30-45 days.

Drink a minimum of 65 oz. water while keeping to a minimum dehydrating drinks such as coffee, tea, alcohol and sodas. Also note that any caffeine intake after 4:00PM or within six hours of bedtime whether it be from coffee, tea, soft drinks or chocolate can disturb sleep. Alcohol, such as a glass of wine before bed, will likely cause poor sleep.

Physical therapy to the neck, jaws and shoulders compliment bite guard wear. Physical therapy may be done in your dentist's office or may be referred out. This therapy may involve electronic devices, trigger point injections, laser therapy as well as hands on physical therapy. Your dentist may recommend a chiropractor in some cases. Relaxation of neck, shoulder and jaw muscles is necessary to achieve maximum success by returning muscles back to their normal working length. It is extremely important that you wear the MAPA as a compliment to these other therapies.

Since teeth are supposed to touch during heavy lifting, DOT NOT wear your bite guard if you are weight lifting or lifting objects that require teeth bracing.

Avoid using dry heating pads. Moist heat is good. Cold is a distracter only. Never sleep on a heating pad. Twenty minutes is long enough with a moist heating pad. Wait two hours before repeating.

Should you have additional questions, please call your dentist.