

Ask a Medical Expert:

Answers to all your Health and Wellness Concerns

Q Sometimes I wake up to find I'm grinding my teeth. I'm worried about the condition of my teeth. If my enamel wears off, will it grow back? I'd like to stop this problem once and for all. What can I do?

A. Tooth grinding damages the top biting surfaces of all the teeth, and the enamel will never grow back. Grinding is commonly seen in the developing mouths of the very young, particularly when teeth are erupting and the bite is continually changing, even in babies. But as we age, the "gnashing of teeth" can indicate some very real problems that can be helped or even eliminated.

Circumstances which require immediate attention are when grinding shows up as severe wear and tear on the teeth. Flat teeth can be an indication of TMJ problems, and can be evidenced by painful joints, clicking and popping ears, sore muscles and headaches. Grinding then is an indication of muscle imbalance and dysfunction in the face and neck. There is research to indicate if we have sleep apnea, we may grind our teeth to wake us up during sleep just so we can take a breath. See your dentist or sleep specialist to get help. It can save your teeth and your life!!

Debora Klein, D.D.S., Alpine Dental

A. Many people find they grind their teeth at night, a condition called bruxism. This habit can be potentially dangerous for the health of your teeth and jaw joint. Bruxism can be caused by many things including a poor bite, trauma to the teeth or joint and, most commonly, stress. Seeing your dentist to diagnose why you are grinding is the first step. Most likely he or she will make a mold of your mouth and have a custom night guard made to help you stop grinding. You will have to wear the night guard every night to prevent grinding and stop the damage to your teeth and joints.

Melissa Jentz-Cote, D.D.S., Geneva Family Dental

Q I know so many parents who have a child with ADHD. Is ADHD on the rise, or do we just have better methods for diagnosing it?

A. One thing is for sure, the diagnosis of ADHD is on the rise. The National Institute of Mental Health claims that 3 to 5 percent of American children are diagnosed with ADHD. However the American Society of Pediatrics suggests a higher number closer to 12 percent. While these numbers suggest ADHD is on the rise, there is some validity to the fact that awareness has also increased. Many more teachers and parents are educated about the symptoms involved with ADHD, making the detection more common.

There is, however, controversy within the health care community about this very question. The problem lies in the fact that the diagnosis of ADHD is highly subjective and while standards for diagnosis exist within the mental health profession, namely in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), not all health care professionals are familiar with the criteria. It is important that the diagnosis of ADHD be given by a trained mental health professional as many other disorders can appear similar to ADHD.

Most commonly ADHD is treated with prescription medication. There is again controversy over the use and effectiveness of this medication. There are many alternative therapies and treatments, including chiropractic, that have had success improving the symptoms of ADHD so there is hope and help for a child with this diagnosis.

Erin Massey, D.C., Massey Family Chiropractic and Wellness Center

Q My 15-year-old daughter suffers from terrible acne. What is the best treatment for acne? Is there a new approach? How long will it take to see an improvement in her skin?

A. Your daughter need not suffer from terrible acne. Today's teenagers are lucky that so many viable treatments have been developed for acne. For treatment of acne, the FDA has approved a variety of topical and oral medications--some of them being new. The best treatment for your daughter will depend on the severity and distribution (face, chest, back) of her acne. A board-certified dermatologist can quickly diagnose your daughter's specific acne problem and recommend an optimal treatment with a reasonably predictable time frame for improvement.

Amy Derick, M.D., Derick Dermatology

A. While there is no complete cure for acne, there are things that we can do to help clear up the skin and keep the acne under control. I highly recommend the Isolaz™ Acne Therapy, which is an FDA approved laser treatment that treats acne from the inside out. Isolaz™ helps to control acne at its source with a unique combination of vacuum and a painless laser that helps clear existing acne, while helping to prevent future breakouts. Home care is also extremely important, and using products right for her skin will be very beneficial.

Shahwar Syed, M.D., Aleyra MediSpa

Q I'm a 40-year-old woman and have recently been having a really hard time. Whenever I laugh or lift something, I lose some urine. I was told this is called incontinence, but I don't know what to do. Is there something I can do to stop incontinence from happening?

A. Urinary incontinence, or urine leakage, is a common complaint of women of all ages; however, it is never normal. Incontinence can be treated with physical therapy, medication or surgery. Physical therapy is an effective, yet conservative method of treatment without negative side effects. Treatment can be as simple as behavior modifications regarding toileting habits or fluid intake. More extensive treatment may include soft tissue release, muscle energy techniques for pelvic alignment, and computerized muscle testing (biofeedback).

When women think "incontinence," they often think "Kegel." A Kegel exercise is an isolated pelvic floor contraction that simulates "stopping the flow of urine." Performing a proper Kegel contraction can be difficult. For this reason, therapeutic exercise in physical therapy tends to focus on strengthening the pelvic floor through supporting musculature including buttocks, lower abdominals and inner thighs.

Commitment to treatment and compliance with your home exercises and behavior modifications are necessary to see true and lasting results. Research suggests symptoms will begin to improve at about 3 ½ weeks of treatment. Once the patient begins to see results, motivation increases greatly! I encourage any woman with this issue to truly commit to physical therapy for a month to determine if this would be her ideal course of treatment.

Maggi Leise, P.T., Women Serving Women
(a specialty of ATI Physical Therapy)

We are committed to addressing all the unique health issues of women. If you have a question, our health professionals have an answer. Please send your questions and concerns to ashleigh@suburbanwoman.net.