

# Nightguards and Occlusal Orthotics

Nightguards are indicated for individuals who need protection for their teeth when they sleep. There are many reasons to have a nightguard made but the most important thing is to have one custom made, not over the counter “store bought” premade. Occlusal Orthotics are made for resolutions of TMD/”jaw” pain problems.

Nightguards: There are several features of a nightguard that are important;

1. As stated above, custom made to your mouth by a dentist is critical. A custom made nightguard will not only work well, if designed and made properly from the correct materials, but last longer and protect your teeth. A properly made nightguard can last for years of service.
2. The nightguard should be made of a hard material, not soft. Some materials are made of a thermal sensitive material that needs to be heated slightly to soften it for placement then returns to a hard material shortly after placement. This has an advantage compared to a hard material that is completely inflexible. Teeth shift and move your entire life, so something hard cannot adapt and may become uncomfortable to wear.
3. A nightguard should cover all the teeth in even contact. This is paramount feature that is absolutely necessary. All the teeth should have even contact to avoid shifting of your teeth. While a temporary orthotics may be used to help TMD pain, and only contact anterior teeth, separating the posterior teeth, they should only be used a temporary (3-6 months) orthotic to reduce symptoms and pain. For long term use, a nightguard should contact all the teeth.
4. Another feature of a nightguard that is important is anterior guidance. The anterior teeth should guide the mandible (jaw) during movement, separating the posterior teeth.
5. Most nightguards are made to fit the maxillary arch opposing mandibular teeth. In rare instances nightguards are made for the mandibular arch.

Occlusal Orthotics:

Occlusal Orthotics are made for relieving pain in the jaw and allowing the mandible to relax, helping the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) and associated muscles and connections to relax and heal. Occlusal orthotics are made for temporary (3-6 month) usage while the muscles and connective tissues heal. After relaxation, a further occlusal evaluation may be made and teeth balanced. Following balance and harmony, a nightguard may be indicated to protect the jaw/teeth from further problems.

**If you have any questions about nightguards and occlusal orthotics, please feel free to ask us.**