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## **Patient Instructions for Wearing Occlusal Guard**

- The occlusal guard will allow your jaw joints and muscles to function more smoothly. It will allow the jaw to find its best position because the guard prevents the teeth from locking together. It should reduce muscle spasm, clenching habits, jaw/joint pain; teeth wear, and cracked teeth.
- Wear the occlusal guard as instructed, which is usually during sleep. You may have been advised to wear it during the day also, especially when you are tense and find yourself clenching and grinding.
- Excess saliva may be present for a few days. You may find you have removed your guard during the night. Do not worry about this. Place it in your mouth again the next night. It may take a couple of weeks before you adjust to wearing the guard.
- When the occlusal guard is removed from the mouth, you may notice that the "bite" of your teeth feels different for a few minutes. This is to be expected because of the relaxation of your lower jaw muscles.
- After a few days, you should have little difficulty in speaking. Remember, any difference in your speech is magnified in your own ears, but is not as noticeable to others.
- Do not clench your teeth on the occlusal guard because this will cause muscle spasms or pain. Remember this phrase: "From these words never depart, lips together, teeth apart." Your teeth should be apart when the guard is out also, unless you are chewing food.
- It's very easy to maintain your new occlusal guard. It is non-porous and will not absorb any stains or odors. Clean both sides carefully with a toothbrush and toothpaste every time you remove it. Do not use alcohol or alcohol-based products. Never boil your occlusal guard. Good tooth brushing of your own teeth is also very important.
- Use your storage case to store your occlusal guard. You can store it either wet or dry; however do not store it in alcohol or alcohol-based products. Many mouthwashes contain alcohol so please read label carefully!
- Keep your regular check-up appointments and remember to bring your guard with you. They are necessary for adjusting and refitting the occlusal guard.
- If you are having jaw pain, avoid eating tough and chewy foods while your TM joints, ligaments and muscles are healing.
- When you experience pain, apply moist heat to the affected area of the face. Use a damp washcloth under a hot water bottle for 15 to 20 minutes, 3 to 4 times a day. Sipping on hot liquid, such as tea, and rolling them around in your mouth may provide comfort.
- Keep your guard away from pets; they seem to love them.
- If you travel be careful not leave your guard in the hotel room.