

***A**BFRACTIONS and **A**BRASIONS*

Two dental terms for lost tooth structure at the facial gum line are *abfraction* and *abrasion*. The differences are:

- *Abfractions* are "v-shaped" notches; *abrasions* are "saucer-shaped" worn areas
- *Abfractions* are caused by clenching or grinding; *abrasions* are caused by aggressive brushing and/or not using a soft toothbrush
- *Abfractions* can extend below the gum line; *abrasions* are associated with gum recession

It is important to note that both *abfraction* and *abrasion* can occur simultaneously. Also, the destructive effects of either process can lead to loss of teeth! Additionally, it is sometimes difficult to tell if the process is currently active. Some of the indicators of active *abfraction* or *abrasion* are:

- ✓ The areas of tooth loss are getting bigger
- ✓ Your teeth are sensitive to cold
- ✓ Your facial gum tissues are red and receding
- ✓ The earlier in adulthood these problems occur, the greater the potential for problems



There are a number of prudent steps to take to prevent *abfraction* and *abrasions* from causing further loss of tooth structure.

Consider an **occlusal guard**. About 25% of the population clench or grind their teeth at night (and are completely unaware of it!). This force causes the tooth to break down where the enamel is thinnest-at the gumline. A clear acrylic occlusal guard is recommended to be worn at night to protect your teeth.

A promising new technology called **BruxCare™** uses biofeedback to reduce night-time clenching and grinding.

Small tooth-colored **fillings** can be placed into the defects which protect the teeth and improve their appearance.

Often teeth will wear to a shape that perpetuates *abfraction*; this can be corrected with an **occlusal adjustment**. Orthodontic treatment is recommended in some cases.

Brush your teeth gently, avoid a "sawing" motion, and use a soft toothbrush.

Eliminate habits like fingernail biting, chewing on straws, etc.

Avoid excessive exposure to acids: lemons, carbonated beverages and bulimia.

Consider rinsing with an over-the-counter fluoride rinse to harden and protect tooth surfaces.

Our goal is to help you keep your teeth for a lifetime.

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