



PRESS RELEASE

Connecting Sleep Apnea and Bruxism with Narrow Arches Fixing One Problem May Solve Others

SACRAMENTO, CA—August 20, 2015—Bruxism and sleep apnea are known to have multiple possible causes, but one factor that many dentists are noticing as a recurrent risk for both of these disorders is narrow arch width, especially in the upper jaw. Commonly called teeth grinding, bruxism typically occurs during sleep. As its name suggests, sleep apnea is also a problem that occurs when you slumber, but this disorder involves your body experiencing a lack of oxygen. Research indicates that the two complications are often linked and may be solved by modifying narrow jaws.

Finding Your Jaw Width

To determine your maxillary arch width, dentists such as Sacramento's Dr. Brian Steele measure the distance between the two first molars in your upper jaw. When the gap between them is less than 35 millimeters, dentists consider this a narrow arch. Why does the Sacramento Dentistry Group believe this measurement is important?

Based on studies from the Université de Montreal, a primary risk factor for bruxism in children and adults is a narrow arch. So when Dr. Steele notices a narrow maxillary arch, he examines the client carefully for signs of bruxism — teeth worn down or damaged without a known cause. Montreal scientists also report that sleep apnea is two to three times more likely to be diagnosed in “bruxers” than it is in the rest of the population. This leads Dr. Steele to next question the patient about their quality of sleep and whether they snore. Poor sleep, a feeling of exhaustion in the morning and snoring are just a few possible symptoms of sleep apnea.

Helping Bruxism and Sleep Apnea Patients

The next interesting finding from researchers is that solving a sleep apnea disorder reduces or ends bruxism in most children treated for sleep apnea. So curing one problem often leads to fixing the other! This is an important medical result because studies show that untreated sleep apnea increases mortality and bruxism gets worse over time, not better. Therefore, solving a patient's sleep apnea issue is a major step towards improving their well-being.

Improve the Bite to Improve Breathing

The next question to approach is: “How does improving your bite improve your health?” Dentists with the Sacramento Dentistry Group believe improving the oral airways is the best solution for patients with narrow arches. This requires orthodontics. Many people think orthodontics is strictly a cosmetic procedure — using braces to make a straight smile. The truth is that *malocclusions* — bad bite patterns — lead to many serious oral and medical health problems. In the case of a narrow arch, some doctors theorize that the reduced volume in the oral cavity contributes to the lack of oxygen reaching the patient's lungs. A narrow arch also leaves insufficient space inside the mouth for the tongue, further blocking the airway. Therefore, if a patient has a narrow arch, bruxism and sleep apnea, simply widening the arch may provide a solution to all three difficulties.

Solutions For Narrow Arches

Every client is different and the best solution for widening an arch depends on the patient's teeth and jaw. The Sacramento Dentistry Group offers a number of methods for increasing arch size, including the comfortable and convenient Invisalign process, traditional braces and orthodontics, or the new DNA appliance. If you struggle with bruxism, sleep apnea or both, Dr. Brian Steele provides free consultations to determine if the arch width requires improvement. While various factors, both genetic and environmental, lead to smaller arches, dentistry can widen them safely and effectively, to the benefit of many! Contact the Sacramento Dentistry Group at sacramentodentistry.com or via their phone number: 916-538-6900.