Teeth grinding:
Causes and solutions

Teeth grinding is a movement disorder of the jaw in which there is gnashing, grinding, or clenching of the teeth. It's called bruxism. Often, people are unaware of their habit.

The two primary types of teeth grinding are sleep bruxism, which occurs during sleep, and awake bruxism, which occurs when the person is awake.

There is not a single contributing factor that results in teeth grinding or bruxism, rather it is believed to be the result of complex interactions between many factors, including stress, tension and anxiety; levels of certain chemicals in the brain; other sleep disorders such as snoring or sleep apnea; or a response to pain from earaches or teething (in children).

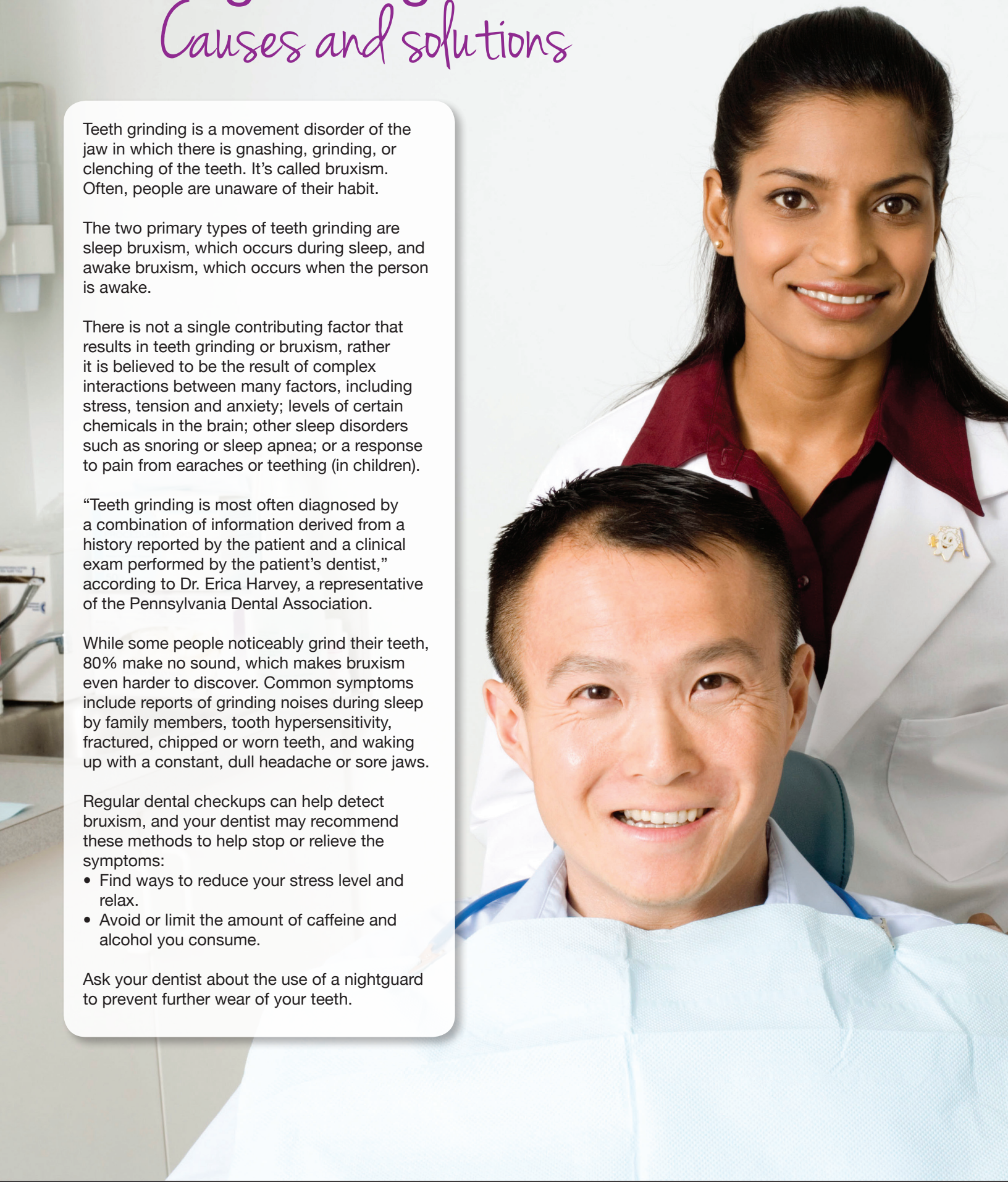
"Teeth grinding is most often diagnosed by a combination of information derived from a history reported by the patient and a clinical exam performed by the patient's dentist," according to Dr. Erica Harvey, a representative of the Pennsylvania Dental Association.

While some people noticeably grind their teeth, 80% make no sound, which makes bruxism even harder to discover. Common symptoms include reports of grinding noises during sleep by family members, tooth hypersensitivity, fractured, chipped or worn teeth, and waking up with a constant, dull headache or sore jaws.

Regular dental checkups can help detect bruxism, and your dentist may recommend these methods to help stop or relieve the symptoms:

- Find ways to reduce your stress level and relax.
- Avoid or limit the amount of caffeine and alcohol you consume.

Ask your dentist about the use of a nightguard to prevent further wear of your teeth.



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