



For immediate release: 19 October 2011

**Patients alerted to impact of stress on
their dental health**

On the eve of Bruxism Awareness Week (24-30 October 2011), founders of the Saving Teeth Awareness Campaign are calling for greater recognition of the impact of stress on dental health.

In some patients, stress causes grinding and clenching of teeth, known as Bruxism, and this in turn can cause cracks to develop. It is thought Bruxism affects around 8-10% of the population(1). Leading endodontic specialist, Julian Webber, urges those who know they are clenching or grinding to talk to their dentist about what can be done and how they can protect their teeth.

Dr Webber, says "Once a tooth has suffered decay and been filled, further deterioration over time is likely. Furthermore, when a tooth is cracked, or fractured, it is susceptible to pulpal

inflammation. If the pulp becomes infected, a root canal treatment may ultimately be required."

He continued: "If you add stress into the mix and have people with filled teeth, clenching and grinding, they can develop a range of problems in their teeth and jaws. I can generally tell the patients who are stressed just by looking into their mouths."

Because we are living longer, teeth are working for longer but being worn down due to a number of factors, including grinding. The last Adult Dental Health Survey (2) found that moderate tooth wear had increased.

Sometimes the impact of Bruxism can cause as much pain as an infected tooth. Some patients who are referred to Dr Webber's practice, the Harley Street Centre for Endodontics, turn out **not** to need root canal treatment. The cause of the pain is the jaw muscle which has been over-worked by stress.

"With Bruxism Awareness Week nearly upon us, this is a good time to talk to your dentist about wear and tear on your teeth and how he or she can help you."

References:

1) <http://www.bruxism.org.uk/what-is-bruxism.php>
2) http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/007_Primary_Care/Dentistry/dentalsurvey09/AdultDentalHealthSurvey_2009_Theme2_Diseaseandrelateddisorders.pdf

For more information, go to www.savingteeth.co.uk

Press enquiries and photographs:

**Caroline Holland. T. 020 8679 9595 / 07974
731396. caroline@mediamardle.com**

**Emma Pelling. T. 020 7624 7533 / 07958 558172.
emma@pellingpr.co.uk
www.savingteeth.co.uk**

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