

CAN DENTISTS CURE MIGRAINES?

Some patients are desperate for any chance of relief from migraines. They will try almost anything. There is still a lot unknown about the causes and diagnosis of migraines. It is believed to be an inherited central nervous system disorder that becomes sensitive and hyperactive, resulting in a migraine.

Unfortunately for headache sufferers, many gimmicks exist that prey upon their hopes for better treatment. Dental appliances that claim efficacy in treating all sorts of head, neck or facial pain have been around for years. These appliances are sometimes called anterior deprogrammer, anterior tooth separating appliance, anterior bite plate, muscle deprogramming device, removable anterior jig appliance. They are designed to fit on the upper front teeth and mechanically prohibit the upper and lower back teeth from contacting. They are categorized as "jaw repositioning devices" by the FDA, and though some are approved for use in treating headaches they have not been subject to rigorous clinical trials.

One of the goals of a migraine preventive agent or therapy is to reduce the activity in this hyper-reactive area of the brain. Muscular activity of the head (including the muscles of the jaw) may increase the activity through this area. Dental appliances reduce muscular activity and, therefore, may reduce some of the activity through the generator. Muscular activity is only one of many signals that are carried through this area, and although decreasing excessive muscular activity may have a positive effect on headache frequency, it is not a cure.

This is generally what I tell patients who want to try a dental appliance for headache relief. You will probably get some relief, but it is likely not a cure for migraines.

(Some of the information for this article is taken from the headache-help.org website)