Fire In the Hole

Understanding Acid Reflux, Sleep Apnea, and Tooth Wear

*Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results*. Albert Einstein

Current Thinking The Usual Suspects

* Acid Reflux - GERD Heartburn related to spicy foods and/or stress
* Sleep Apnea Stopping Breathing, often related to obesity
* Tooth Wear Tooth Grinding, often related to stress

**Tooth Wear may be related to stress, but not only emotional stress.**

**Daytime stress is related to daytime tooth grinding, NOT nighttime grinding.**

**Physiologic stress plays major roles in tooth wear, nighttime grinding, and root sensitivity.**

**AIRWAY**:

* Snoring, Sleep Apnea, or UARS (Upper Airway Resistance Syndrome) causes a negative air pressure in the upper chest.
* Negative pressure can pull an acidic mist, from the stomach, to the esophagus, oral cavity, and sinuses.

**ACID**:

* GERD-Heartburn and pain is the result of significant acid in the esophagus, which runs behind the heart. Symptoms:
  + Heartburn, Chest Pain, Nausea, Trouble Swallowing
* LPRD-LaryngoPharyngeal Reflux Disease is (often) not painful. A lower volume of acid coming up into the oral cavity and sinuses causes LPRD. Symptoms:
  + Heartburn - possible
  + Hoarseness
  + Something Stuck in the Throat
  + Trouble Swallowing
  + Frequent Clearing of the Throat
  + Bitter Taste
  + Post Nasal Drip

**TEETH**: Wear, Abrasion, Erosion, and Sensitive Roots

* Saliva buffers the acid and comforts the irritated esophagus.
* Swallowing is the body’s response to the acid.
* Swallowing results in the teeth touching.
* Tooth contact causes the acid softened enamel to wear down becoming flat, and chipped.
* Acid affects the exposed dentin: accelerates toothpaste abrasion and notching of the roots.
* Tops of the teeth exhibit “cupping-dimples.”

If you have worn teeth, sensitive roots, heartburn, throat “issues”, sinusitis, and sleep disturbed breathing, consider approaching and managing the problem from this new perspective.

Reference: *Sleep Interrupted* by S. Park, M.D., p. 5-9. *The Bruxism Triad* by J. Rouse, D.D.S., Inside Dentistry, May 2010, p. 32-44

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