

Abfractions

Abfractions damage teeth

Abfractions are notches in the tooth structure near, or even under, the gumline, usually on the cheek side of the tooth.

Although all the causes of abfractions are not known, theories include improper forces on teeth caused by a misaligned bite or by grinding and clenching. Some evidence suggests using too much abrasive toothpaste eats into the enamel.

The causes of abfraction and their treatments

Abfractions could be caused by—

❖ improper forces on teeth from a misaligned bite

When your bite is slightly off, one tooth may hit sooner than the rest. This causes undue stress on the involved teeth, and they begin to flex. Over time, this continual flexing and stress causes the enamel to separate from the inner dentin layer of the tooth, forming a notch at the gumline. If your bite is off, we may smooth areas down so that chewing forces are evenly distributed among all your teeth.



Bite misalignment causes stress on enamel



Nightguard



Abfraction

❖ grinding and clenching

Tooth grinding and clenching also place extra stress on teeth. If tooth grinding or clenching is the problem, we may prescribe a nightguard to absorb those stresses and protect your teeth.

❖ toothpaste abrasion

The way you brush your teeth could be the problem. The abrasive ingredients in toothpaste, often combined with aggressive brushing action, gouges out a V-shaped indentation in the tooth's enamel. If we suspect you might be using too much toothpaste or are brushing too hard, we recommend that you brush using only fluoridated mouthwash, and only use a soft toothbrush.

Once the cause of the abfraction is addressed, we may restore the notch in the tooth by bonding a filling in place, or, we may cover the notch with gum tissue to help stop sensitivity.

Tooth-colored fillings can restore the tooth to nearly its original color and shape.

Dealing with abfractions early can prevent further damage and restore your teeth to beautiful good health.