

## Occlusion

When most people think of a trip to the dentist, they are usually thinking about cleanings, cavities or improving their smile. These are all important things; however there is one element of oral health that is most often overlooked by dentists which is the subject of “occlusion” – that is, the way the teeth meet in relation to the jaw joints (“TMJ’s”). A large segment of my practice is treating patients with “malocclusion” that results in head and neck pain, migraines and balance problems due to their bite. Many are referred by physicians, dentists and other health professionals who know that I diagnose and treat these problems, while others are new patients who are entering my practice for routine care, many having these types of problems, but never relating them to their bite, or occlusion. This is why I include this most important element of one’s oral health within my treatment recommendations, as not correcting it prior to treating the teeth could worsen the symptoms. I know this from personal experience, because prior to my learning of this subject from one of my mentors, Dr. Robert Lee, I unwittingly worsened patients’ symptoms through teeth treatment (fillings, crowns) performed without regard to occlusion prior to my having studied it. Knowing of its importance now, I could no more treat teeth without considering occlusion, than, for example, an ethical mechanic would consider placing new tires on a car without first aligning its front end.