



HELENA FAMILY DENTISTRY

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What are the notches in my teeth?

A “Non-carious cervical lesion” is the dental term for a condition in which notching of the tooth near the gumline occurs. Usually it occurs with gum recession and is on the root surface/neck of the tooth.

If you have these notches, it is important to prevent the notches from progressing. The notches have a similar appearance to how a beaver chews a tree, and as the notch gets larger, the tooth gets weaker and may fracture. In addition, the teeth may become sensitive as the notches get deeper.

The cause of these “NCCLs” is thought to be related to a combination of factors including:

- 1) Aggressive toothbrushing
- 2) Clenching or grinding
- 3) Acid erosion of the teeth

To prevent the notches from progressing, many things can be done:

- ALWAYS use a soft bristled toothbrush
- When brushing, do not brush with a back-and-forth scrubbing motion. Instead, use small circular or jiggling motions (or hold the toothbrush in place if using an electric toothbrush)
- Use a non-abrasive toothpaste. Avoid toothpastes that say they are whitening or have tartar control. Use regular Crest or regular Colgate, the Arm & Hammer toothpastes with baking soda, or Sensodyne Pronamel
- Do not brush your teeth for at least 20 minutes after eating or drinking anything other than water. The teeth are more susceptible to wear during this period of time
- Wear a night guard to protect your teeth from clenching/grinding at night
- Use prescription toothpaste or wear fluoride trays at night to harden and protect the softer exposed root surfaces of the teeth
- Have the notches in the teeth restored with fillings, which can strengthen them and prevent sensitivity