

## TONGUE THRUST HABITS

A large percentage of bite problems we see (up to 50%) are either caused by or made worse by a tongue thrust habit. Normally the tongue rests in the roof of the mouth and pushes up and back to help swallowing. Tongue thrusting is when the teeth come apart slightly when swallowing and the tongue pushes forward or sideways against the teeth. Since we swallow about once a minute, this repeated pressure can move the teeth and cause problems such as spacing, protrusion or open bite where the teeth don't meet.

Our concern is that this habit, if left untreated, could cause the bite to relapse back to some of the original problems present before orthodontics. Therefore, we strive to detect these habits and eliminate their cause when possible. Mouth breathing due to allergies or previous upper respiratory infections is the most common cause of tongue thrust habits.

We can usually eliminate tongue thrust habits with an exercise program called myofunctional therapy. This program is simple and requires only ten minutes a day at home for six to twelve months to work. We have found it to be more effective than appliances such as tongue spurs placed in the mouth.

There is a more comprehensive explanation in my article "A Simple and Effective Method of Correcting Deviate Swallowing Habits" in the article section on this web site.