



Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Dysfunction

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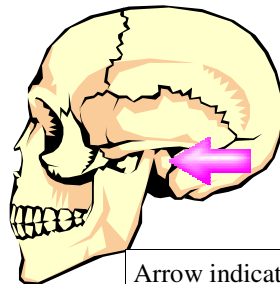
Development of Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Disorders

TMJ disorders develop for many reasons. You might clench or grind your teeth, tightening your jaw muscles and stressing your TMJ. Or, you may have a damaged jaw joint due to injury or disease. Whatever the cause, the results may include a misaligned bite, clicking or grating noises when you open your mouth, ringing/pain in the ears, headaches, upper back or neck pain, or trouble opening your mouth wide.

Treating your TMJ disorder

TMJ disorders are a family of problems related to your complex jaw joint and the muscles surrounding it. If you've had symptoms like pain or a clicking sound, you'll be glad to know that these problems are more easily diagnosed and treated than they were in the past. Since some types of TMJ problems can lead to more serious conditions, **early detection and treatment are important**. No one treatment can resolve TMJ

disorders completely, and treatment takes time to be effective. But with the help of your health care team, you're more likely to have a healthier and more comfortable jaw. There's no simple prescription for your TMJ disorder. Restoring your jaw's harmony may include several kinds of treatment to reduce muscle tension or rest to heal your jaw joint.



Arrow indicates location of the TMJ

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Causes of TMJ Dysfunction

- Muscular imbalances
- Muscle Overuse
- Tooth problems (malformed bite, grinding)
- Misalignment of bones in the head and/or jaw
- Poor Posture
- Stress
- Trauma (blow to the jaw, whiplash, etc.)
- Sinus infection
- Arthritis

Symptoms of TMJ Dysfunction

- ⇒ Headaches
- ⇒ Ringing in Ears
- ⇒ Neck or Ear Pain
- ⇒ Pain while eating or talking
- ⇒ 'Popping' or 'Clicking' in Jaw
- ⇒ Jaw Lock

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What is 'Jaw Lock'?

Jaw Lock, not to be confused with Lock Jaw (Tetanus), can occur with patients who have problems with their TMJ. The jaw can end up in one of two 'locked' positions, open lock or closed lock.

⇒ In an open lock situation, a subluxation has occurred. The jaw's condyle has slipped forward to the fibrocartilagenous disc. The position of the disc will then prevent the jaw from moving

back into its resting position, and the patient will be unable to close his or her mouth fully.

⇒ In a closed lock situation, the fibrocartilagenous disc has displaced forward or inwards. The jaw's condyles are blocked in their downward movement and the jaw cannot open more than approximately 25mm.

Massage and Chiropractic Care

Massage

The objective of the treatment is to create an optimal environment for the mandibular heads and fibrocartilagenous discs to move freely within the TMJ. This is achieved through a series of soft tissue manipulations.

Treatment of patients with TMJ dysfunction and orofacial pain often begins with thorough manipulation of all thoracic muscles. Techniques are used to decrease tone, tenderness and trigger points and may vary depending on the patient's needs. Once this is achieved, a technique called effleurage is used to bring optimal nutrition to the affected structures and flush out unwanted metabolic wastes.

The treatment ends with a scalp and head/neck/shoulder massage to alleviate any possible discomfort caused by the treatment. Strengthening exercises for mandibular depressors and ROM exercises for the TMJ are usually prescribed.

Active Release Technique (ART)

ART is a manual technique that relaxes muscle by getting under adhesions with their fingers or thumb. The muscle can then gently be stretched out while applying pressure, breaking up the adhesions.

This technique can be used to treat TMJ problems by both working the muscles and helping improve

postural imbalances contributing to TMJ pain.

Chiropractic

Disorders of the TMJ are treated effectively by chiropractic. The jaw and neck are evaluated for the amount of flexibility. The soft tissues and muscles are checked to determine the degree of tightness in the area surrounding the neck and jaw. The amount of movement of all joints in the TMJ and the neck are checked and if a loss of movement is found the joints are adjusted to restore movement.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is another effective treatment for TMJ pain. Needles are inserted at certain points in the body to help relax the facial muscles and the jaw.

The needles may be placed on the face (especially around the jaw), into the hands and fingers, or into the feet.

It has been estimated that 10 million people in the USA have symptoms of TMJ problems at any given time.

Source: The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research

Self Care for TMJ Dysfunction and Pain

- Avoid activities that stress the TMJ, such as chewing gum.
- Hot or cold packs can be used to relieve pain. Use cold when inflammation is present and moist heat to relieve tense muscles, as directed by your health care practitioner.
- Chew your food slowly and avoid taking overly large bites. Choose softer foods, as these will allow the muscles of your jaw to rest.
- Having good posture will help relax your jaw. While sleeping, use a pillow that provides proper neck support. While sitting, reduce muscular strain by closing your mouth with your teeth slightly apart rather than touching. Breathe through your nose instead of your mouth.
- Avoid cradling the phone between your ear and shoulder, as this puts further strain on your jaw.
- See your dentist; you may need to be fitted with a night appliance.