

TMJD

Temporomandibular Joint Disorder

Some 60 million Americans have TMJD. Simply put, TMJD is the syndrome that happens when the muscles in the jaw and the temporomandibular joint are out of alignment or misaligned, causing problems when chewing. In plain English, the ligaments, muscles, bones and joints do not line up, causing pain.

Some Symptoms Associated with TMJD:

1. a clicking, popping or grating sound when opening or closing the mouth
2. headaches and/or dizziness
3. tenderness in the jaw muscles
4. earache
5. jaws that sometimes lock open when yawning or if mouth is help open
6. spasm or cramps in the jaw area (very common)

What Causes TMJD? These are the most common causes:

1. accidents
2. developmental (natural) defects, including the wearing down of teeth or fillings causing a misalignment of the teeth
3. surgery
4. orthodontics
5. stress that causes clenching of the jaws and grinding of the teeth
6. naturally misaligned teeth

What Can be done to Correct TMJD?

- If the temporomandibular area has been damaged by arthritis or as a result of an accident, **surgery** may be needed to correct the TMJD and re-establish the proper occlusion. Far more likely, your doctor will recommend a **therapy** that may include a *bite splint* and specific exercises to keep the teeth from touching and to allow the joint to remain lined up, allowing the jaw's hinge area to relax. Such therapy increases your comfort diminishing the TMJD pain. If a splint is prescribed for you, it is very important that you follow your doctor's instructions regarding the *amount of time and time of day you must wear it*.
- If your condition is temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJD), you need to wear your splint all the time unless directed otherwise. Do not remove the splint when you eat, as this would compromise your treatment and diminish its effect. The split stops tooth-to-tooth contact and keeps your jaw lined up properly, allowing the muscles and joint area to heal. As this healing takes place and the symptoms gradually disappear, your doctor will adjust your splint to keep your teeth properly aligned. During this period of your therapy, you will begin wearing the splint *fewer* hours of the day and, after a period of time; you will no longer need to wear a splint.

Grinding ("bruxism") and Clenching: These conditions require you wear your splint only at night while sleeping

Clean the splint by brushing it. Keep it in water and mouthwash solutions when it is not in your mouth.

Physical Therapy for Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (TMJD)

1. The purpose of this therapy is to “train” your lower jaw to function freely and without pain. Many situations cause malfunction of your lower jaw. Examples are: accidents, surgery, developmental defect, peculiar oral habits, numerous fillings placed over many years, orthodontics, stress, bruxism (clenching or grinding of teeth), and other conditions.
2. The following therapy will usually relax the jaw muscles considerably if you are consistent in carrying them out. Approximately 80% of patients with muscular jaw problems feel better doing this therapy.

Therapy:

- a. **Heat.** Apply heating pad, hot washcloth, hot water bottle, or other heat source to the affected areas for 5 minutes before beginning exercise.
- b. **Exercises.** Carry out the following exercises for 1 minute each (total of 5 minutes)
 - i. **Open Close.** Place fist under front of jaw to resist opening movement. Do not cause pain. Be gentle. Open and close jaw 30 times in one minute.
 - ii. **Forward.** Move jaw forward and back with fist on front of chin.
 - iii. **Right.** Move jaw to right with fist on right front of chin to resist movement.
 - iv. **Left.** Move jaw to left with fist on left of front of chin to resist movement.
 - v. **Neck turn.** Sit up very straight. Rotate head as far right as possible and gently force turn once every 2 seconds for 30 seconds. Turn head to left and repeat.
- c. **Heat.** Apply heat for another 5 minutes.
3. Further treatment may be needed to assist in your treatment. This may include a plastic bite splint to assist in making you bite in the correct position (an “occlusal splint”), or slight, careful trimming of teeth and fillings to make your teeth and jaws come together correctly (“occlusal equilibration)
4. Please call us if you have any questions or concerns either now, or at any time during your therapy.