



TMD/TMJ SELF CARE

WHAT IS TMD?

Temporomandibular Joint Disorder/Dysfunction (TMD) is a broad term for problems with the jaw joint (TMJ). TMD often presents with clicking, popping, locking and/or pain in the jaw joint.

OPTIONS TO CONTROL THE PAIN

My goal as a health care provider is to empower patients with some basic self care techniques to prevent them from having to commit to a lifetime of discomfort, chipped/broken/worn teeth and/or splint wearing (of which, proper compliance in teens and young children is not common).

WATCH YOUR HABITS

Caffeine and gum chewing in particular can cause TMD to worsen quickly. Consider reducing frequency of consumption or eliminating altogether.

CORRECT POSTURE

Proper posture prevents all sorts of problems. With TMD it can prevent the head and neck muscle tension and inflammation that leads to nighttime clenching and grinding. Checking body and jaw posture frequently throughout the day can have an enormous impact. Try setting alarms on phones/smart devices to check frequently (hourly) for a few days or until frequency of daytime clenching decreases.

HEAD AND NECK

Sit up right with your core toned, head stacked on your spine, hips tucked beneath you and shoulders relaxed. Try to bring your book/tablet/phone to you rather than going to it. Too often, it's easy to catch yourself leaning forward toward your device or book with your neck extended and shoulders pulled up by your ears.

JAW

Swallow or say the word "No." Your tongue will touch behind your front teeth on your palate. Place your tongue there and allow your jaw to hang open in a rest position, lips closed and teeth only a few millimeters apart.

JAW SUPPORT DURING SLEEP

When sleeping, our brain wants to keep the lower jaw in our midline. If you sleep on your side, your jaw will hang slightly to one side. Your brain doesn't like this and will either clench to hold your jaw in the midline and/or grind side to side in attempts to get it back to the midline. Sleeping on your back allows for proper jaw position. Most of us find ourselves sleeping on our sides. When sleeping on your side, pull your pillow out from under your shoulder and between your shoulder and your jaw. This will provide your jaw with the support it needs to avoid/reduce grinding and clenching.

MASSAGE

Care for those muscles. Use massage to help. Focus on facial, head, neck and shoulder massage. A referral to a massage therapist can be made if needed.

PAINT MANAGEMENT CONT.

TMD SELF CARE HOT/COLD COMPRESS

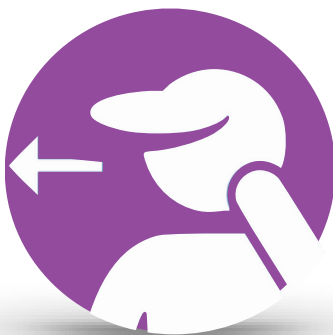
Use hot/cold compress during times of notable pain/symptoms (use what feels best or alternate both 5-10 minutes at a time).

STRETCHING

Simple stretching during periods of notable stress or pain can be enormously helpful. Start with these simple head and neck stretches to alleviate some of that stress and tension that precipitates TMD. Try each of the following stretches nightly for 30 seconds:



EAR TO SHOULDER



LOOK OVER SHOULDER



CHIN/JAW TO THE SKY



CHEST OPENER



HEAD/CHIN RETRACTION

CONTROL THE PAIN

When TMD pain is present, it is often due to the inflammation in the joint and as stated above, this pain/inflammation often leads to a cyclical nature of the grinding and clenching. Use of an NSAID (ibuprofen/Motrin) or, if over 14yrs of age, naproxen sodium (Aleve) to reduce swelling and pain will help break the cycle. Consider taking these routinely for a day or two depending on the severity of your symptoms.

Those who have committed to physical therapy for joint/muscle problems know first hand how helpful a little awareness and targeted therapeutics are. It takes work, but well worth the effort. I hope you find relief in some of these suggestions. In the event self care is simply not enough, we can fabricate a splint or refer you to an oral myofunctional therapist, TMD specialist, or oral surgeon. Please be sure to discuss your concerns/symptoms regarding TMD with us so we can help.