



Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (TMJ)

What is TMJ?

Temporomandibular (TM) disorders are a problem with the muscles and joints that connect your jaw to your skull. TM disorders cause pain on one or both sides of the jaw when you open your mouth, chew, or yawn. TM disorders are often caused by tight jaw muscles. Tight jaw muscles (muscle tension) can be caused by clenching or grinding your teeth or when you are under stress. This causes symptoms of ear pressure, ear pain, ear fullness and sometimes pain radiating on the side of the face.

How is TMJ Treated?

You may be able to get your jaw to relax if you can lower your stress and avoid clenching or grinding your teeth. Self-care at home may be enough to reduce your symptoms. If not, contact your physician.

1. Put a warm, moist cloth or heating pad set on low on your jaw for 10 to 15 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the heating pad and your skin. Do this at least 3x per day for 2 weeks.
2. Eat soft foods only and avoid chewy foods (such as popcorn, jerky, tough meats, chewy breads, gum, and raw apples and carrots) that cause your jaws to work very hard. Perform this for 2 weeks. Cut your food into small, bite-sized pieces, and chew slowly. If your jaw becomes too painful to allow chewing, or if it locks, you may need to puree your food for a few days or weeks.
3. During this 2 wk time take ibuprofen 800mg 3x daily
4. Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week to relieve stress. Walking is a good choice.

If these measures do not work, contact your dentist to make you a bite block to wear at night.

Things not to do:

Cradle the telephone receiver between your shoulder and your jaw.

Open your mouth all the way, like when singing loudly or yawning.

Do No Clench or grind your teeth, bite your lips, or chew your fingernails.