

T.M.J. DYSFUNCTION - PAIN SYNDROME

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

WHAT IS IT?

The temporomandibular joint (T.M.J.) is the “jaw” joint used when one opens and closes their mouth during eating, speaking, etc., and is located just in front of both ears.

The T.M.J. dysfunction - pain syndrome is a neuromuscular and/or joint dysfunction which is manifested by the following symptoms in and around that area.

SYMPTOMS

- Pain in the lower jaw, T.M.J., teeth, temples, neck or back.
- Muscle soreness in the muscles that open and close the mouth, and muscle soreness in the neck, back, and temples.
- Popping or clicking sounds when opening or closing the mouth.
- Trismus or the inability to completely and painlessly open and close the mouth because the muscles controlling this function are in spasm.
- Ringing in the ears or a stuffy sensation in the ears.
- Tooth fracture, filling fracture, tooth mobility, and tooth sensitivity (especially to cold) are common tooth problems.

CAUSES

- Trauma or injury to the upper or lower jaw or to the T.M.J. itself, recently or in the distant past.
- Grinding or clenching the teeth when asleep or during the day. (Teeth are only to touch in function (eating, speaking, etc.) only for several minutes per day; anything more is considered abnormal or excessive function).
- Stress factors such as emotional, mental, or physical stress.
- Dental work - “High” fillings, crowns, bridgework, or dentures.
- Missing and misaligned teeth that may change how the teeth meet and effect the T.M.J.
- Occlusal Disorders - When a disturbance exists between the relationship of the biting (occlusal) surfaces of the upper teeth to the biting surfaces of the lower teeth.

NOTE: These above causes may also be perpetuating factors used in combination with one or two other causes in one patient.

TREATMENTS:

HOME REMEDIES:

- **Heat/Cold Therapy:** Moist heat (5-10 minutes), followed by ice (1-5 minutes), and followed again by moist heat (5-10 minutes). Above three should be performed on the effected joint 3-6 times/day.
- **Soft Diet:** Avoid opening your mouth too ‘wide’. Eat nothing hard or crunchy like popcorn, thick hamburgers, uncut meat, etc.
- **Immobilize The Joint:** If possible, avoid talking, especially if you must speak very loud forcing you to open your jaw too wide.
- **Avoid Touching Your Teeth:** Throughout the course of the day, you should only touch your teeth during chewing (1-2 minutes max.). Record the times you touch other then in chewing and work on train yourself to avoid touching your teeth at these times.
- **Correct Swallowing:** Learn to swallow without touching your teeth.

MEDICATION : Use of medications (anti-inflammatory drugs, muscle relaxants, and analgesics) over a short period of time to bring temporary relief.

MISCELLANEOUS TECHNIQUES

Splint Therapy, Stress Management, Cognitive Awareness, Bio-feedback, Imagery, Psychotherapy, Hypnosis, Physiotherapy, and Myofunctional Therapy.

OCCLUSAL EQUILIBRATION: Systematic adjustment of the biting surfaces of the teeth (removal of tooth enamel) to correct the relationship between the upper and lower teeth as they may effect the T.M.J.

ORTHODONTICS: Repositioning the teeth through the use of braces or removable appliances so that there exists a better harmony between the teeth and T.M.J.

RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY: Arthroplastic surgery to the inside of the T.M.J. to better position the head (condyle) of the lower jaw in the articulating surface of the joint.