



Care for Temporomandibular Joint/Muscle Pain/Dysfunction

You are experiencing pain and / or dysfunction in the joint between your jaw and skull in front of your ear. The muscles connected with this joint are in spasm. To relieve the pain and dysfunction, we need to eliminate the spasm. The following guidelines will help:

1. Rest your jaw. Don't clench your teeth together.
2. Eat a soft diet like eggs, yogurt, soup, applesauce, mashed potatoes, etc. Avoid hard, crunchy or chewy foods such as hard pretzels, chewing ice, steak, raw vegetables, pizza and bagels.
No chewing gum.
3. Avoid opening your mouth wide, such as a big yawn or biting into a big sandwich.
4. Apply moist heat to the affected area with a hot water bottle or heating pad at least twice a day for 20 minutes or more. Massaging the jaw muscles in front of the ear may help relieve the pain.
5. Take over the counter Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) 400 mg. Every 4-6 hours for 3-4 days during the acute phase. This helps with pain and inflammation.
6. Pay attention to jaw movements and positions, which you may not be aware of doing. Avoid leaning your jaw on your hand when resting or watching TV. Good head posture is important.
7. Avoid pillow pressure on your jaw if you are sleeping on your side or stomach. A neck support will help avoid this. Sleeping on your back keeps pressure off your jaw. However, it is difficult to control what you do when you sleep.
8. Clenching and grinding your teeth while you dream is very common and you cannot prevent it. This can aggravate the joint and muscles. Clenching is more likely during periods of stress; worry, being very busy, poor sleep etc. It may be necessary for you to have a night guard made that will rest our jaw while you sleep if your symptoms do not improve.
9. Anything to reduce stress may help; exercise, relaxation, etc.

These guidelines will help only if you follow them. If there is little or no improvement after following these guidelines carefully for a week or two you may need prescription medications, night guard therapy and physical therapy.