

Exercise 3

Support one jaw joint as before with the fingers of one hand, keeping the thumb on the side of the chin. Make a fist with the other hand and place it on the side of the chin. Open the jaw, swinging the jaw towards the fist. Gently press against the jaw with the fist. Hold this half open position for a timed 20 seconds.

Exercise 4

Swap hands and repeat the exercise to the other side. Many patients find it quite easy to swing the jaw in one direction, but find swinging it to the other side quite uncomfortable and difficult. Persevere.

Do each exercise in turn and repeat the whole series six times. Do the whole series three times a day every day for four to six weeks.

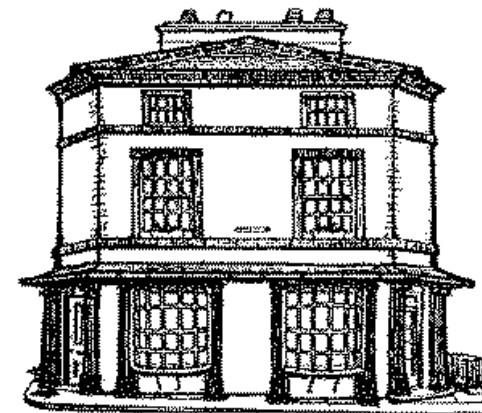
Do remember that for the exercises to work they must be done regularly and conscientiously. Do the exercises very gently at first to get into the swing of things, gradually building up the power as the condition improves.

After the jaw has become free of pain and you can open smoothly and widely without deviation, start reducing the frequency of the exercises until you gradually stop doing them.

Further Information

The information in this leaflet is based on advice and documentation from the Dental Hospital in Newcastle. If you have any problems or require any further information, please telephone Newcastle Dental Hospital on 0191 2336161 and ask the switchboard to transfer you to the Restorative Dentistry Department.

Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD)



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This leaflet has been produced to provide you with information about Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD) and aims to answer any questions that you may have.

What is TMD?

TMD describes a variety of conditions which affect the jaw joints and muscles. Problems may occur on one or both sides. It is very common. Many people have some signs of TMD but only a small number suffer pain.

What causes TMD?

We do not know exactly what causes TMD. For years Dentists thought that TMD was caused by the way the teeth and jaws lined up. However research has shown that mis-alignment of the teeth and jaws is not a major cause of TMD. Today we believe that TMD is caused by many things acting together, some of which have little or nothing to do with your teeth. Most discomfort is from overuse of the joints and muscles. There are many ways this can occur:

- Clenching the teeth together. This may be brought on when you are concentrating or extra busy, worried, annoyed, or even by cold winds.
- Grinding the teeth together. This often occurs at night but can also be during the day.
- Straining the joints and muscles by chewing pencils, biting your nails, holding things in your mouth (dressmakers holding pins etc) or by holding the telephone between your neck and shoulder.

- Overworking the muscles by constant chewing, eg chewing gum all day.

Will it get worse?

TMD does not usually keep on getting worse. The problem tends to come and go, often feeling worse during times of stress. Studies demonstrate that it does not get worse with age, but is one of the few conditions that seem to get better as you get older.

What problems can I get?

- Jaw pain or soreness that may be worse on waking, or in the evening
- Jaw pain when biting, chewing or yawning
- Clicking from the joint when moving your jaw
- Stiffness or locking of the jaw joint
- Earache without an infection
- Difficulty opening or closing your mouth
- Frequent headaches

What can you do?

You are the key – without your help the treatment will not be as effective.

- Keep your teeth apart when not wearing your splint. The proper resting position for your jaw is with the teeth slightly apart and your tongue resting gently on the floor of the mouth. This allows your jaw joints and muscles time to rest and heal.
- Avoid opening your mouth very wide
- Avoid habits like chewing fingernails or gum
- Avoid straining your neck and shoulders by poor posture. This can occur when working at a computer or holding the phone between neck and shoulder
- Eat nutritious foods that do not require hard or prolonged chewing

- Avoid caffeine and smoking. Both of these are stimulants that can make the pain seem worse and increase muscle fatigue
- Follow the exercises in this leaflet
- Try to give yourself 10-15 minutes a day to relax

Remember, be patient. Nine out of ten TMD patients get better by simple methods alone

Remedial Jaw Exercises

The remedial exercises should be done in a calm relaxed manner, sitting down in front of a mirror. They cannot be hurried.

Before starting the exercises the jaw joints should be warmed up. This can be done by applying a hot water bottle to one side of the face for 5 minutes, and then to the other side for 5 minutes.

Exercise 1

Place your hands under your chin, then partly open your mouth against upward pressure from the hands for a timed 20 seconds. Hold the position and then swallow and relax for a few seconds. Then move on to exercise 2.

Exercise 2

Lightly support both jaw joints with your fingers in front of your ears and place your thumbs on the side of your chin. Open the mouth smoothly and widely. Use your thumbs to make sure that you open the mouth without moving the jaw to either side. Hold the position, and then close the mouth. The importance of this exercise is to open the jaw without moving to either side. Wide opening will come with practice.