

# Jaw Pain

We care about optimizing your dental health and decreasing discomfort in your TMJ (temporomandibular joint).

## What is TMD?

TMD is short for temporomandibular disorder, which refers to any problem in the jaw joint or surrounding muscles.

### Symptoms of TMD may include:

Ear pain, headaches, tender jaw muscles, clicking or popping noises when opening or closing, difficulty opening or closing, jaw that "locks" or "gets stuck," pain with yawning, or pain with eating.



## TMD Treatment

For many patients, TMD symptoms come and go - symptoms are often managed rather than "cured." We usually recommend starting with conservative treatment and the "less is often best" approach.

### Self-care therapies:

- **Keep jaw relaxed** - Your teeth should only be touching when you are actively eating, otherwise they should be apart. Remind yourself to think: Teeth apart, lips and face relaxed. Try taking three deep breaths, saying "M" and then relax.
- **Minimize activities that cause pain** - Anything that causes discomfort should be discontinued. Avoid habits such as chewing on pens/pencils and clenching your teeth. Minimize your caffeine intake, and you may need to alter your diet to avoid hard and/or chewy foods like gum, steak, and raw vegetables.
- **Moist heat** - Apply moist heat to the sore muscles or joints 2-4 times per day for 10-20 minutes. Some people find that ice is also helpful for 10 minutes, so alternating heat and ice is an option.
- **Relaxation and sleep** - It is important to decrease stress and anxiety as much as possible. Try to get 7-8 hours of sleep per night. Possible relaxation techniques include listening to music, yoga, meditation, or just deep breathing. If you grind or clench your teeth at night a night guard is recommended.
- **Medication** - For acute flare ups, an NSAID such as ibuprofen may be helpful. Take medication as prescribed for 1-2 weeks.



Please speak to your dentist if symptoms persist.

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