

**Patient Information:**

# TMJ

## TEMPEROMANDIBULAR JOINT PAIN

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***What is the TMJ?***

The temporomandibular joint is located in front of the ear where the skull and lower jaw meet, which allows the lower jaw to move and function.

**SYMPTOMS OF TMJ DISORDERS:**

- ◆ Clicking or grating sounds in the joint
- ◆ Pain at the joint site and/or when opening and closing the mouth
- ◆ Earaches
- ◆ Headaches
- ◆ Limited ability to open the mouth
- ◆ Pain when chewing

**CAUSES:**

- ◆ Grinding the teeth at night (bruxism)
- ◆ Trauma/injury
- ◆ Stress triggering pain in the jaw muscles, spasm in the jaw muscles from clenching the teeth
- ◆ Arthritis
- ◆ Displacement or dislocation of a disc that is located between the jawbone and the jaw socket

**HOME CARE:**

- ◆ Avoid sleeping on your jaw. Sleeping on your back enables your jaw to relax.
- ◆ Application of moist heat with a hot towel and massage of the area at least twice a day for approximately 20 minutes. A heating pad may help.
- ◆ Avoid chewy or hard foods. Avoid chewing gum or cracking ice.
- ◆ Eat soft foods.
- ◆ Avoid clenching your teeth. Many people clench their teeth when they drive. Become aware of stressful situations that cause you to clench your teeth.
- ◆ OTC anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen or Alleve®. Take only as directed on the label.

**REFERRAL TO AN ORAL SURGEON/WHAT THE ORAL SURGEON MAY PRESCRIBE:**

- ◆ A referral to an oral surgeon will be made if the above recommendations do not help. Referral is not included in your health fee; you are responsible for the cost/treatment.
- ◆ The oral surgeon will first determine what the underlying cause is. X-rays may be ordered.
- ◆ Referral to other dental specialists or physical therapists may be made.
- ◆ Bite plate or splint therapy may be ordered.
- ◆ Stress management counseling may be recommended.
- ◆ If nonsurgical treatment is unsuccessful or if there is joint damage, surgery may be indicated.