

# TMJ-Temporomandibular Joint Disorder

It has been recognized that the majority of TMJ disorders are best managed through non-invasive forms of simple therapy, behavior modification and awareness. Up to 85% of cases are self limiting, meaning the symptoms will disappear or be greatly reduced with simple intervention.

-Plenty of rest is essential for rehabilitation as in any muscle strain. Be aware of any clenching or grinding during your daily routines, especially during times of stress. Make a conscious effort to keep your teeth apart during the day. Keeping the teeth apart prevents the jaw muscles from fully contracting and allows them to relax.

-Try to always maintain good posture when sitting, standing and at rest. Do not rest your chin on your hand as this transfers pressure to the joints and musculature. Allow your lower jaw to hang freely. Do not chew on hard candy, ice, or your nails. This will help in preventing your muscles from functioning outside of their normal range of motion. Try to support your chin when yawning to prevent spasm.

-Try to follow some simple guidelines as far as diet. Avoid gum and hard or extremely chewy foods. Softer and smaller bites of food will reduce the amount of force required of your chewing muscles. Remember to maintain a balanced diet and drink plenty of water as nutrition plays a big part in recovery.

-TMJ disorder is a major side effect of stress and tension. Many benefit from trying to reduce stress and tension by exercising, meditation, soothing music, warm showers, slow deep breathing, etc. Any and all forms of stress reduction will have varying degrees of success depending on the individual.

-Anti-inflammatory pain medication is effective in the following regimen: 200-400 mg in the morning and at night for 1 week. Advil, or the generic equivalent is the most popular form of drug recommended. It provides for relief of discomfort and its anti-inflammatory action expedites healing of damaged tissue.

-Application of ice can reduce inflammation, pain and/or swelling of the joints and muscles during acute episodes. Ice should be applied in a massage (figure eight motion) fashion for 15 minutes on, 15 minutes off for 1-2 hours of an acute episode. Moist heat is effective for increasing muscle flexibility in chronic cases or immediately prior to stretching exercises.

-Jaw exercise program is as follows: Place the thumb of one hand on the edge of front teeth of the upper jaw and place the index finger of your other hand on the edge of front teeth of your lower jaw. Relax. Gently let your hand pull the lower jaw downward as much as possible without feeling pain. Hold this position to the count of ten. Repeat this 10 times per series for three or more series per day.