

SELF-CARE TIPS FOR TEMPOROMANDIBULAR (TMJ) DISORDERS

1. **REST THE MUSCLES AND JOINTS.** This will allow healing.

Rest includes:

a) **A SOFT FOOD DIET**-Avoid crunchy and chewy foods like hard nuts, chips, carrots, and hard breads.

b) **AVOID CHEWING GUM**

c) **NO CLENCHING** Learn to say "teeth apart, face and jaw relaxed"

2. **AVOID OPENING TOO WIDE.** This protects the joints and prevents them from locking open.

a) **YAWN AGAINST PRESSURE**

b) **EAT SMALL BITES**

3. **APPLY COLD** for 5-10 minutes for severe pain, new injuries (less than 72 hours).

4. **APPLY MOIST HEAT** for 20 minutes for mild to moderate pain to increase circulation, and muscle relaxation, this promotes healing.

5. **USE HEAT AND ICE** for quick relief from muscle pain. Apply heat for 5 seconds then ice for 5 seconds and repeat 4-5 times.

6. **MASSAGE** the jaw and temple muscles. This stimulates circulation, relaxes muscles, and decreases soreness..

8. **MAINTAIN GOOD POSTURE:** Avoid a forward head posture which may increase jaw and neck muscle activity and soreness.
9. **TELEPHONE USE:** Do not cradle the phone it irritates jaw and neck muscle.
10. **SLEEPING POSITION:** Sleep on side. Use a pillow to support between neck and shoulders, and soft support along the face and jaw, or sleep on your back with the back of the neck supported.
11. **EXERCISE** 20-30 minutes at a time, 3-4 times a week. Choose low impact exercises to minimize pressure on the joints.
12. **YOGA AND MEDITATION** are excellent methods to reduce stress.
13. **OVER -THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS** are helpful for pain and inflammation. Take 2 aspirin or ibuprofen 4 times daily, according to directions.
14. **GOOD NUTRITION** promotes joint and muscle healing.
15. **AN ATHLETIC MOUTHGUARD** can provide temporary pain relief until you can consult your dentist.