



# Temporomandibular Joint disorders

Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) dysfunctions are conditions that affect the muscles, joint, and ligaments of the jaw which cause the jaw to move out of alignment.



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Pain is felt in or around an ear. Pain in the jaw spreads to the face or the neck and shoulders. Pain is felt when you open and close your mouth or you can't fully open the mouth.
- Headaches
- Toothaches

## CAUSES

- Clenching or grinding the teeth (bruxism).
- Poor posture or sleeping in a way that misaligns the jaw or creates tension in the neck.
- Stress in life when it results in muscle tension in the neck and shoulder.
- Incorrect or uneven bite or injury to the jaw.

## TREATMENT

- Wearing a mouthguard or bite plate
- Physical therapy
- Medicine to reduce swelling. One type is given through a shot in the jaw joint. Muscle relaxants may be prescribed for a short period of time.
- Ultrasound therapy to provide heat deep into the tissue that increases blood flow and muscle relaxation.
- Counseling if the TMJ is caused by stress
- Surgery is a last resort.

## TRIAGE QUESTIONS

Does severe pain cause problems with eating? Or, can you not open or close your mouth?

NO

YES

**GET MEDICAL CARE FAST**



Do you have signs and symptoms of TMJ listed on this page?

NO

YES

**SEE DOCTOR**



**USE SELF-CARE**



## SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

Self-care measures may reduce the need for medical treatment.

- Massage the jaw area several times a day, first with your mouth open, then with it closed.
- Wear a mouth protector or mouth device, as prescribed by your doctor or dentist.
- Take medication, as prescribed.
- Don't chew gum or eat foods that are hard to chew.
- Maintain a good posture.
- Try not to open your jaw too wide when you yawn and when you bite into foods, such as an apple, burger, etc.
- To help reduce muscle spasms that can cause pain, apply moist heat to the jaw area. Use a washcloth soaked in warm water.
- If stress is a factor, use relaxation exercises.
- Take steps to reduce the risk of jaw injuries.