

## Exercise to improve the function of the jaw

The following simple exercise if carried out correctly and regularly, over a 2-3 week period, will often improve the symptoms dramatically.

Set aside two 1 minute periods each day when you are relaxed.

Close your mouth with your back teeth together, resting the tip of the tongue on your palate just behind your upper teeth.

Run the tip of your tongue backwards onto the soft palate as far back as it will go, keeping the teeth in contact.

Keeping your tongue in contact with the soft palate slowly open your mouth until you feel your tongue being pulled away from the soft palate. Do not try and open your mouth further.

Remain in this position for 5 seconds and then close your mouth. Repeat this for 1 minute. Do this twice a day.

When you first start doing this exercise make sure you are opening your mouth in a straight line.

Initially the pain will seem to get worse, however continue with the exercises.

### Summary

This condition is chronic with many causes. It is possible the symptoms will come and go.

If this occurs, you should continue with the exercises given, be aware of restricting wide mouth opening and bite into or chew really hard food.

This leaflet helps you cope with the symptoms you have. Unfortunately there is no quick fix cure for this condition

## Bite Raising Appliances

You might need a bite raising aid to help if you have a clenching or grinding habit.

Your dentist will be asked to make this for you if required

It should be worn every night for 3 months before I review you again in the department.

You may need to continue wearing this or a variation of this appliance on a long term basis

Author: Lisa Drewett  
Role: Dental Nurse  
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Salisbury District Hospital  
Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 8BJ  
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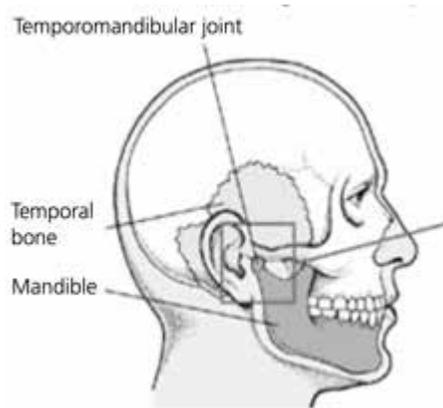
information

**Temporomandibular joint dysfunction (TMJD)**

**Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery Department**  
**01722 336262**  
**Ext. 3255**

# What is Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction? (TMJD)

The temporomandibular joint (jaw joint) is located in front of the ear where the skull and the lower jaw meet. The joint allows the lower jaw (mandible) to move and function. The joint itself is made up of two bones that are separated by a disc of cartilage. Ligaments and muscles surround the joint.



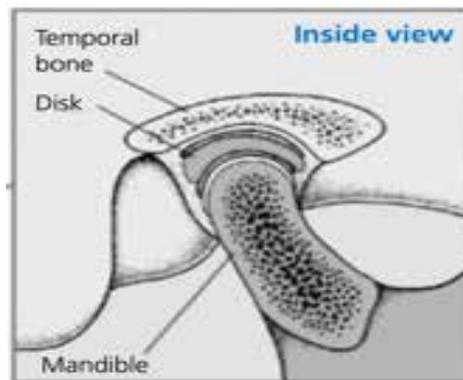
Problems with the jaw joint are very common, approximately 1 in 10 people have jaw problems, but only 1 in 20 need consults from doctors. Typically only last a few months before getting better. In some instances only the muscles are affected (myofascial pain dysfunction) whereas in others the cartilages and ligaments may also be at fault (internal derangement of temporomandibular joint).

## Symptoms

The most common symptoms are:

- Joint noise – such as clicking, cracking, crunching, grating or popping
- Pain - usually a dull ache in and around the ear. The pain may radiate, i.e. move forwards along the cheekbone or downwards into the neck
- Headache
- Limited mouth opening

Most jaw joint problems are made worse by chewing and are aggravated at times of stress. Pain is caused by the muscles in and around the jaw joint tightening up. Joint noise occurs if the disc or cartilage moves out of its normal position between the bones of the jaw joint. Most commonly the cartilage slips forwards and a noise is made when it returns to its normal position



## Management of TMJD

A soft diet that requires little chewing – this allows over-worked muscles to rest.

- **Painkillers** - anti-inflammatory medication (such as Nurofen) is good and can be taken as either tablets or applied as a gel on the outside of the joint.

- **Heat** – such as warm water in a hot water bottle (avoid boiling water) wrapped in a towel applied to the side of the face.

- **Relaxation therapy** - learning techniques to control tension and stress.

- **Jaw joint exercises** – the exercises that are best for you will have been discussed by the doctor seeing you. Please remember to carry them out as instructed.

- **Resting the joint** as much as possible such as avoiding yawning.

- **Bite raising appliance** - Providing a clear plastic splint that fits over the teeth and is worn mainly at night. This helps support the joint and surrounding muscles.

- **Replacing missing teeth** to balance the bite – if this is appropriate it will have been discussed with you.

- **Surgery** - Surgery is only carried out in a small number of cases. This can involve manipulation or wash out of the joint whilst you are asleep. In extreme cases it may be necessary to open the joint and operate on the bones, cartilages and ligaments.