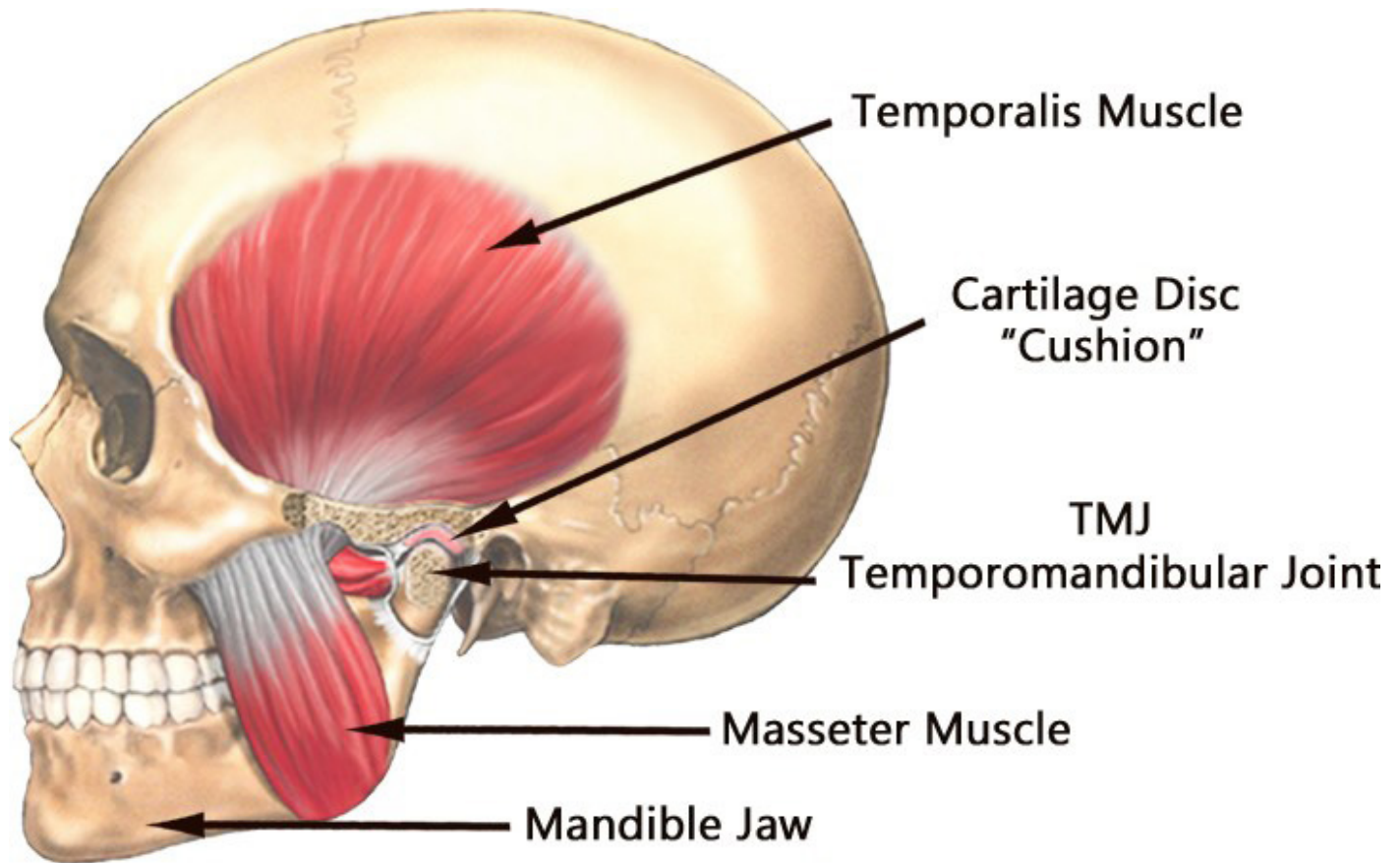


## Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction (TMJD)

TMJD is a term used to describe pain and/or dysfunction of the jaw joints (TMJs) and/or jaw muscles. The TMJ is a hinge and gliding joint and is the most constantly used joint in the body. It is comprised of a ball (condyle) and socket (fossa). Between the condyle and the fossa is a cartilage disc that acts as a cushion to absorb stress and allows the condyle to move easily when the mouth opens and closes. Sometimes this cartilage disc gets slightly displaced such that your joint goes on and off the edge of the disk during jaw movements. This results in a clicking sound and is very common (1 in 3 people have this). This clicking is not a problem in and of itself but may become problematic if it is associated with pain or limitation to jaw range of motion.



### Symptoms

TMJD can be very detrimental to one's quality of life due to its impact on normal functioning such as eating and talking. Symptoms may include:

- jaw pain
- limited mouth opening
- joint noises (clicking, grinding, etc.)
- changes in your bite
- tension in jaw muscles
- jaw getting stuck in open and/ or closed position

## Causes

The TMJ is the most constantly used joint in the body and many cases of dysfunction are related to its overuse. Common habits leading to overuse injuries include grinding or clenching teeth, chewing gum, biting nails/pens, eating hard candies/ice, excessive talking, chewing predominantly on only one side, sleeping in position that applies force on your TMJ, and other parafunctional habits. Many of these habits are exacerbated in times of stress or when there is uncontrolled anxiety and/or depression. Other causes of TMJD include arthritis of the TMJ, unstable bite, trauma to the TMJ/jaw, sprain injuries related to chewing on something or sleeping in abnormal position, or dental procedures that required prolonged mouth opening.

## Treatment

- You may use an ice pack over the jaw to help with pain and inflammation: apply ice wrapped in a thin towel for 10 to 15 minutes. Repeat every 2 hours or as needed for pain relief.
- Some people find a warm compress more soothing. It is OK to apply a warm compress as often as desired to aid in symptoms.
- If able to tolerate non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen or naprosen, it is advised to take a 2 week course to aid in reducing inflammation. Example: ibuprofen 600mg 3 times a day (with meals) for 2 weeks around the clock.
- Perform self-massage to the sore muscles and jaw stretches. You may also be referred to the physical therapy department.

## Diet

- Start a soft non-chew diet and continue this for 4 to 6 weeks. Please refer to the '*Pureed Recipe Book*' for recipe options.
- Try eating several smaller meals throughout the day to limit the strain on your jaw muscles.
- Avoid biting into foods with your front teeth as well as opening your mouth wide. Cut your food into smaller pieces.
- Avoid foods that are hard, crunchy, or chewy (i.e.,: raw vegetables, nuts, chips, meat, popcorn, French bread).
- Do not use straws.

It is important to identify habits of overuse/misuse, learn how to avoid triggers, and establish healthy joint use practices. As many habits leading to overuse injuries are exacerbated by stress, anxiety, and depression it is important to address these things and we have many resources available to help; please see the handout on '*Stress Management & Relaxation Techniques*' for additional information or you can also contact your primary care physician for additional guidance and help. Please see below lists of things to avoid and things to work on.

### Don'ts:

- Do not chew gum or bite your lower lip or cheek habitually.
- Do not eat hard foods like nuts, seeds, hard candies, ice, French bread/toast.
- Do not bite nails or chew on pens/pencils.
- Do not protrude/posture your lower jaw forward.
- Do not rest your chin on your fist/hand while sitting at table.
- Do not sleep on your stomach.

- Do not sleep on your side with your hands against your jaw or in a way that causes any pressure on your jaw.
- Do not clench your teeth during the day (your teeth should NOT be touching when at rest).
- Do not cradle the telephone between your shoulder and jaw.

#### Do's:

- Limit opening your mouth wide when laughing, coughing, sneezing, singing, or yawning (support your jaw with your fist held under your chin).
- Practice the 'MINE' technique for finding a neutral jaw position. This involves resting the tip of your tongue on the front roof of your mouth as you make an 'N' sound (as you do when saying 'mine'). There should be a small space between your upper and lower teeth.
- Maintain good posture at all times with relaxed shoulders and good ergonomics when sitting.
- If it is painful to open your mouth to brush your teeth, use a child's toothbrush.
- It is best to sleep on your back; you can use a small rolled towel under your neck or a cervical pillow for support.
- Use a bitesplint at night/as directed if you find it helpful. Do not use if it makes the pain worse.
- When having dental procedures, remind your dentist that you have TMJD and ask for brief rest periods when you can close your mouth to reduce muscle strain. You should also request they use a bite block to help you keep your mouth open with minimal muscle strain.
- Pay attention to your chewing habits; some people habitually chew on one side more than the other. You should try to chew in a balanced way using both sides.
- Do use reminders to check that you are not clenching and are using proper posture.