

Managing your jaw pain (temporomandibular joint—TMJ)

Information for patients



Introduction

The jaw joint is also known as the temporomandibular joint (TMJ). Your jaw can become painful because of an injury, swelling around the joint, poor postures or bad habits such as grinding your teeth.

This leaflet will give you some ways you can manage your jaw pain.

Common problems with jaw pain

- Headaches.
- Jaw stiffness in the morning.
- Pain in jaw, ear or eye socket.
- Pain when you are chewing (especially hard foods).
- Pain when you are yawning.
- Clicking, grinding or locking of your jaw.
- Difficulty opening of your jaw.

Treatment

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy can help improve the movement at your jaw. Your physio can use several ways to help you; this could be with exercises, manual therapy and advice.

Do you want to know more about your jaw problem?

There is a lot of information available about your problem but it's important to go to the right place. A good source of information is the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/temporomandibular-disorder-tmd/>

Things you could do to help your jaw pain

Stress

We know that when we are stressed out muscles can be tight and tense. Relaxation techniques throughout the day, can help reduce the tension in your muscles.

Practise deep breathing to help you relax

Laying down or sitting down, without distractions around you, place your hands on your stomach.

Concentrate on taking slow, deep breaths in through your nose.

Feel your chest go up and down.

Do the exercises for about 5 minutes.

Once you have practised this exercise you can do it anywhere, at any time when you start to feel tense or stressed throughout your day.

Change what you eat and how you eat when your jaw is painful

- Eat soft foods, such as pasta.
- Cut your food into small pieces.
- Chew slowly and on both sides.

Stop bad habits

Biting your nails, chewing gum, sucking your lips, clenching or grinding your teeth can increase tension in your jaw.

Exercise

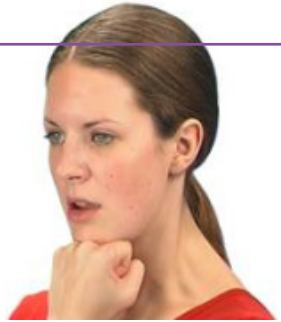
Keep active. Doing daily exercise such as walking, can improve your general health.

Heat Therapy

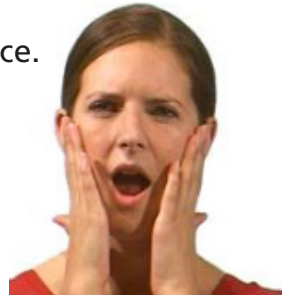
Before you exercise, you could use some heat therapy. Using a warm, damp flannel around a hot water bottle or heat pack, place on affected part of your chin for 15-20minutes, 2 x daily.

Exercises

Place a fist gently under your chin.
Push your fist gently upwards.
Try to open your mouth and feel the
resistance of your fist.
Hold for 5-10 seconds.
Repeat up to 10 times. 2-3 sets. Once a day.



Gently place your hands either side of your face.
Open your mouth slowly and controlled.
Try to get your jaw to move at the same
time on both sides, use your hands to feel if
you are doing this correctly.
Repeat up to 10 times. 2-3 sets. Once a day.



Put two fingers on your chin.
Gently push your lower jaw forward, while
gently resisting movement with your fingers.
Repeat up to 10 times. 2-3 sets. Once a day.



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Date implemented: August 2020
Review date: August 2022
Leaflet No. 557 - Edition 1