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Temporomandibular Joint Pain (TMJ) and Facial Pain Treatment

What is TMJ?

Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction or TMJ disorder is a term used to describe a disorder of the joint located in front of the ear where the skull and lower jaw meet.

The TM Joint is like a hinge between the upper and lower jaw and is the most active joint in the body. It is a complex joint, and is affected by stress and the position of your bite, jawbone and muscles.

Muscles and connective tissue are attached directly to the joint and help control its movement and position. Muscles allow you to open and close your mouth, and control forward, backward and side to side movements of the lower jaw, also known as the mandible. The muscles, ligaments, bones and joints of the jaw work together when you chew, speak, and swallow.

Problems With Your Jaw?

If a disorder exists with this joint, it can make eating, talking and even yawning painful. TMJ disorders can be relatively minor or extremely debilitating. **There may be many reasons for a TMJ disorder: clenching or grinding of the teeth, tightening jaw muscles, disease or injury can cause problems with your TM joint.**

TMJ disorder sufferers can display a variety of symptoms. **Some common complaints of TMJ disorders include:**

- Clicks or pops in the joint when opening or closing the mouth
- Tender or painful jaw muscles
- Difficulty or pain upon open or closing the mouth
- Frequent headaches or neck aches
- Pain in the TM joint
- Ringing or buzzing sound in the ears
- Sensation of stuffiness, pressure blockage or pain in the ears
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

- Hearing impairment that comes and goes
- Pain in the sinus area or behind eyes
- Decreased Jaw opening

What can cause TMJ Disorders?

The cause of TMJ dysfunction may involve the muscles of the joint, the bite or the joint itself. For example:

- Stress on the surrounding muscles and poor posture body alignment can cause the muscles surrounding the joint to tighten or spasm
- Teeth clenching or grinding also known as bruxism
- Abnormal jaw growth
- Missing teeth
- Joint problems can occur as a result of an injury to the joint or other injuries such as whiplash
- Diseases such as arthritis

Treatment of TMJ Disorders

The balance between the muscles and TM joint is an important one in preventing and treating TMJ disorders. If left untreated, muscles and joints that do not work well together may become trapped in a cycle of spasms and cause further injury to the joint, muscles and surrounding tissue.

There are many surgical and nonsurgical treatment options or a combination treatment that can help restore normal function. In some cases, relief from discomfort can come from self-care techniques under the direction of your surgeon.