

Associates in Ear, Nose, Throat & Facial Plastic Surgery, PA

**Facial Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery • Electronystagmography
Head and Neck Surgery • Pediatric Otolaryngology**

JAW JOINT PROBLEMS

The jaw joint in front of the ear is called the temporal mandibular joint. If the joint or its attached muscles are damaged or inflamed, it can cause pain, limitation of jaw movement, muscle tenderness, and joint noise or clicking. This is called TMJ syndrome. Various symptoms have been attributed to this disorder such as ear pain without hearing loss, facial pain, ringing in the ears and even dizziness. Those who have TMJ dysfunction frequently present with ear pain that may have been attributed to ear infections. Examination of the ear usually shows normal ear canals and eardrums. Nevertheless, patients affected with this disorder frequently complain of a feeling of fullness in their ears. Pressing a finger directly over the joint may recreate the pain and tenderness associated with this disorder.

The following treatment options may be helpful:

1. For the next few months, be sure to cut all foods into small, bite-sized pieces and try to avoid opening your mouth any wider than the thickness of your thumb.
2. Do not eat hard crusts of bread, tough meat, raw vegetables, or any other food that will require prolonged chewing.
3. Avoid using chewing gum during this period of treatment.
4. Be sure not to protrude your jaw, as you must do when biting off a piece of thread.
5. Do not bite any food with your front teeth.
6. Avoid protruding your jaw during any other activities: i.e. smoking, conversation, etc.
7. Make every effort not to strain your joint ligaments unnecessarily.
8. Should you find yourself clenching your teeth together, try to remember to keep your "Lips Together and Your Teeth Apart."
9. Try to sleep on your back. Avoid sleeping on your jaw.
10. Moist heat frequently helps relax the muscle tension around the jaw joint. It is recommended to use a warm pack on the affected jointed approximately three times a day for up to 15 to 30 minutes to help decrease the muscle spasm. Warm packs should not be so hot as to cause discomfort or burn the skin.

We hope this information is helpful. If we can provide you with further information or referral to the appropriate specialist, please do not hesitate to contact us.