

joint)

There are various treatment options that we can utilize to improve the harmony and function of your jaw. Once an evaluation confirms a diagnosis of TMJ disorder, we will determine the proper course of treatment. It is important to note that treatment always works best with a team approach of self-care joined with professional care.

The initial goals are to relieve the muscle spasm and joint pain. This is usually accomplished with a pain reliever, anti-inflammatory, or muscle relaxant. Self-care treatments can often be effective as well and include:

- Resting your jaw
- Keeping your teeth apart when you are not swallowing or eating
- Eating soft foods
- Applying ice and heat to sore muscles
- Exercising and stretching your jaw
- Practicing good posture
- Delay dental treatment except for emergency care until episode passes

Stress management techniques such as biofeedback or physical therapy may also be recommended, as well as clear hard acrylic appliance (splint) worn primarily at nighttime may also be utilized. This splint is designed to fit over your top and bottom teeth specifically designed to relax your jaw muscles and eliminated tipping stresses on your teeth, thereby reducing pain. An anterior positioning appliance moves your jaw forward, relieves pressure on parts of your jaw and aids in non-restorative or fragmented sleep. It is usually worn at night to help your jaw heal. These appliances also help to protect your teeth from tooth wear.

Exercises you can do to regain jaw function:

- Jaw openings
 - Open your mouth as wide as possible, holding it open for seven seconds then releasing. Repeat 7 times.
 - Open your mouth as wide as possible, then move your jaw to the left and release. Repeat 5 times.
 - Open your mouth as wide as possible then move your jaw to the right and release. Repeat 5 times.
- Passive Stretching
 - Place One thumb on your top front incisors while placing your index finger on the lower incisors.
 - Use your fingers to open your mouth and hold the stretch.
- Spring Bites
 - Place one thumb on your top front incisors while placing your index finger on the lower incisors.

- Now gently practice springy bites using your jaw muscles. Be careful not to bite down too hard onto your fingers.
- Perform this exercise for one minute many times throughout the day.

If all these therapies don't relieve your discomfort you may be referred to a TMJ specialist for further evaluation and/or treatment.