

Daily Care for Temporomandibular (TMJ) Disorders

Success in treatment for TMJ disorders is dependent on YOUR daily control of your TMJ problem. Dr. Kharouf can help, but the primary responsibility for controlling the condition is in your hands. Then following suggestions are to be followed each day unless specified by Dr. Kharouf.

1. Soft Diet

- During acute periods of pain, a definite soft diet may be particularly helpful. (Baby foods, soups, milkshakes, eggs, Jello, etc.)
- When the symptoms start to improve, you may begin to eat more substantial foods, however you should cut all food into small bit-sized pieces. Do not open your mouth any wider than necessary.
- Do not eat hard crusts of bread, tough meat, hard raw vegetables, or any other food that requires prolonged chewing.
- NO CHEWING GUM

2. Moist Heat

- Moist heat applied for 20 minutes to the area around a painful muscle usually provides more relief than medications.
- This procedure should be carried out for 20 minutes, 3 times a day, allowing at least a 20-minute interval between applications.

3. Cold

- Application of cold is frequently helpful for acutely painful joint conditions.
- A small ice pack may be placed directly over the painful joint for up to 15 minutes. If this worsens the pain, discontinue the use of cold.
- Painful muscle conditions may often be helped by following the moist heat treatment with quick, momentary strokes over the muscle with an ice cube. Then warm the area with your hand, and repeat with the ice cube. Light massage may be attempted at this time.
- Some headaches respond better to cold. An ice pack may be placed on painful areas.

4. Medications

- Since non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID's) are drug of choice for any joint inflammation, you should initially take a loading dose and follow the prescription until finished. If taking aspirin, as symptoms improve, gradually reduce the amount of aspirin you take.
- If your condition warrants a stronger medication, we will prescribe a different type of medication, which must be taken exactly as directed. The effects of anti-inflammatory medications are not seen for up to one week. Continuous use as prescribed is necessary to obtain the therapeutic effect.

5. Disengagement of the Teeth

- To achieve long-lasting relief from TMJ problems, it is essential that all clenching and grinding of the jaws be completely eliminated.
- One of the most important steps in breaking the habit of clenching and grinding your teeth is to learn to keep the lips together, and the teeth apart. You must make a conscious effort to separate the teeth at the same time you keep the lips closed. Repeat to yourself several times a day, LIPS TOGETHER AND TEETH APART.
- This simple step will help relax the very muscles that become tense and taut. This will also help permit a more normal positioning of the jaw and joints.
- Remember: Teeth should only touch when you are eating and swallowing.
- Since yawning can place a strain on the joints and muscles, excessive yawning should be controlled by placing your tongue on your palate to provide resistance and to stabilize the jaw when yawning.
- Oral habits such as biting on pens, fingernails or other objects may aggravate the muscles and joints. Eliminating these habits will aid significantly in the improvement of your condition.

PLEASE TAKE THESE INSTRUCTIONS WITH YOU.

You will find them very helpful. If you have a recurrence of your problem in the future, by following these instructions immediately, your symptoms will be more likely far less severe. YOU are the greatest aid in controlling your problem.



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