

# PREVENTION AND HOME TREATMENT FOR TMJ DISORDERS

By Steve Shirley, DC

Many TMJ related symptoms are caused by poor posture, stress or trauma. This irritates structures in the jaw and face including the Temporalmandibular Joint (TMJ), the muscles that open and close the mouth and the cervical spine.

There are many simple therapies that you can use to help speed your recovery. These include:

- Maintain good posture throughout the day including working on the computer. This helps relieve stressed muscles.
- Make it a habit to relax your jaw and facial muscles throughout the day. Most TMJ sufferers clench or grind their teeth subconsciously and simply becoming aware of this and stopping this habit can help immensely.
- Practice relaxation breathing to develop your body's habit of staying in a relaxed state. This not only relieves muscle tension in the spine and jaw, but can actually help lower your blood pressure. This is particularly effective right before going to bed.
- Use a hot pad or hot towels over the side of your face over your jaw for 10 – 15 minutes as a natural muscle relaxer.
- If you have sharp or burning jaw pain or moderate to severe temporal headaches, ice for 10 minutes can be useful as a natural pain reliever and anti-inflammatory.
- There are several natural remedies useful for anti-inflammatory effect including Boswellia and Tumeric, found in blends such as Kapporest.
- Massage your jaw muscles with your fingers in a circular motion for 5 minutes after using heat to relieve muscle spasm and headaches. You can also do gentle stretches afterwards such as opening your mouth widely short of causing pain and holding open five seconds. Repeat five times.

- Getting a restful night of sleep is essential for your body's self repair mechanism. Many TMJ problems stem from a combination of stress, poor sleep habits and clenching their teeth, especially at night. Learn to relax before going to bed and practice not clenching prior to sleeping.
- There are many kinds of natural remedies to help you sleep at night without drug therapy. A simple approach is to have a cup of Chamomile tea an hour or less before going to bed. Other natural formulations that may help include products like Somnitol Plus which includes Melatonin, Hops, 5-HTP and Valerian root. Consult with your Chiropractor before trying these products.

There are many things that you should avoid to prevent irritation to your TMJ.

Avoid:

- ✓ Gum chewing
- ✓ Hard or chewy foods
- ✓ Making your jaw pop out of habit
- ✓ Clenching or grinding
- ✓ Sleeping on your stomach or putting direct pressure on your jaw with your pillow
- ✓ Getting wound up prior to going to bed by watching TV, playing video games, stressing about your life, worrying about the next day or arguing with your spouse.
- ✓ Slouching – sit up straight!

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Spinal & Sports Care Clinic, PS, 12905 E. Sprague Avenue, Spokane Valley, WA (509) 922-0303