

# Do you have Jaw or Facial Muscle Pain?

Occasionally jaw discomfort is experienced after dental treatment and usually quickly and easily resolves. However if you have more discomfort in the joint and/or muscles than normal you should read the information below and the attached sheets from [PreventingChronicPain.org](http://PreventingChronicPain.org).

The following treatment is recommended immediately after onset of jaw or facial muscle pain to improve symptoms and help prevent delayed recovery. **If you follow these guidelines and the pain is not gone in 2-4 weeks we will refer you to a specialist in orofacial pain for further evaluation. Please call our office.**

## **HERE'S THE PLAN for relieving Mild to Moderate Joint or Muscle Pain:**

**M-Movement:** Slow return to normal movement with gentle use of the jaw during chewing and talking. Stop any clenching, jaw bracing and hard chewing. Use proper jaw posture: keep teeth apart with tongue up gently resting just beside/behind the upper teeth. Use warm or cold compresses.

**E-Exercise:** Normal function can be achieved with exercises that focus on stretching and rotation to restore the normal range of motion. See attached handout.

### **A-Analgesics:**

-Consistent use of Acetaminophen and/or Ibuprofen as directed on the bottle. They can be used together or separately.

-Topical Medication: May be helpful for those who cannot tolerate systemic side effects of medications. We can prescribe 5% Lidocaine patches. The cost of the prescription patches is approximately \$130.00 for a box of 30, your medical insurance may help cover this cost. Lower strength Lidocaine patches (3-4%) are now available over the counter. Typical brand names include: Aspercreme, Salonpas, Lidocare and Zim's. They range in price from approximately \$6.99-\$20.00 for a box of 3-6 patches. All of these patches, either Rx or OTC, may need to be cut down to size.

**T-Treatment:** A temporary protective intraoral splint can be fabricated to wear at night to help reduce jaw-closing muscle activity inhibiting the maximum bite force and can help encourage healing of acute temporomandibular pain and related restricted jaw opening.

-Patients can try an over the counter type night guard but it should be customized so *that it only covers the front teeth preventing the back teeth from coming together to clench or grind* when it's in place.

**HERE'S THE PLAN for relieving Severe Joint or Facial Muscle Pain:** You may choose to use the above methods initially but must also schedule to see a specialist in orofacial pain for diagnosis and a

long-term plan for recovery. We can refer you to a dental facial pain specialist. Also your physician can refer you to therapists who specialize in facial pain. Read below...

## **Delayed Recovery Chronic Pain Protocol: See a specialist in orofacial pain.**

**RISK FACTORS:** Some cases may not respond due to risk factors that lead to delayed recovery and persistent pain beyond 4 weeks. In these cases a specialty dentist trained in orofacial pain should be seen for evaluation and treatment.

**Behavioral risk factors include:** Repetitive oral habits, muscle tension, jaw postural habits, diet and sleep.

**Emotional risk factors:** Anxiety, depression and fear

**Cognitive risk factors:** Poor understanding, unrealistic expectations, coping strategies and catastrophizing.

**Social risk factors:** Lack of social support, conflict and abuse.

**Other health conditions can also be risk factors:** Fibromyalgia, migraine and back/neck pain.

**TREATMENT:** An orofacial pain specialist will diagnose and recommend treatments that may include: Splints, physical therapy, medication and occasionally surgery. Patients often work on self training to encourage normal healing and function.

Specialists often team up to help the patient and the team may include an orofacial pain dentist, a health psychologist and a physical therapist.



## Self-Care for Jaw, Temple, and TMJ Pain

Four principals to encourage healing of musculoskeletal pain include:  
1) Reduce Strain, 2) Relaxation, 3) Posture, and 4) Stretching.



### Apply moist heat or cold and massage tender muscle and joints.

Heat or ice applications used up to four times per day while resting can relax the muscles and reduce pain. For heat, microwave a wet towel for approximately 1 minute or until towel is warm and wrap around a hot-water bottle or heated gel pack and apply for 15 to 20 minutes. For cold, use ice wrapped in a thin cloth on the area until some numbness is felt. Use what feels best.



### Eat a pain-free diet and chew your food on both sides.

Avoid hard foods, such as French bread or bagels. Avoid chewy food such as steak or candy. Cut fruits and vegetables into small pieces. Chewing on both sides will reduce strain. Do not chew gum



### Avoid events or activities that trigger the pain.

Use a pain diary to review daily activities that aggravate the pain and modify your behavior accordingly.



### Avoid muscle tensing habits and activities that put strain on the jaw and temple muscles.

#### Keep the teeth apart and tongue up.

Notice if you do any of these oral habits. Use reminders such as stickers or timers. If noticed, replace negative habits with positive habits such as the "n" tongue position.

- Teeth clenching and grinding
- Teeth touching or resting teeth together
- Teeth tapping
- Biting cheeks, lips, and objects
- Hard and chewy foods
- Resting your jaw on your hand
- Pushing the tongue against the teeth
- Pushing the jaw forward or to the side
- Tensing the jaw
- Jaw strain from musical instruments or scuba
- Opening the mouth too wide with yawning or singing
- Prolonged dental visit with mouth open



### Practice general relaxation and abdominal breathing. Listen to recordings of relaxation.

This helps reduce your reactions to stressful life events and decrease tension in the jaw and oral habits such as clenching.



### Maintain Good Jaw Posture. Keep your tongue up, teeth apart, and jaw muscles relaxed.

Closely monitor your jaw position during the day (waking hours) so that you maintain your jaw in a relaxed, comfortable position. This often involves placing your tongue lightly on the palate behind your upper front teeth (find this position by saying "n"), allowing the teeth to come apart while relaxing the jaw.



### Progressive Stretching. Stretch the jaw and temple muscles.

Place two to three fingers between your front teeth for a cnt to 20: Rest and repeat 6 times. Gradually increase range of motion.



Get a good night's sleep. Avoid caffeinated beverages (e.g) coffee, tea, and soft drinks. Improve sleep environment by reducing light and noise. Get a comfortable mattress and pillow. Reduce stimulating activities in late evening including computer work, video, and exercising. Do not sleep on your stomach.



Use anti-inflammatory and pain-reducing medications. Short-term or intermittent use of over-the-counter ibuprofen, naproxen, acetaminophen, or aspirin (without caffeine) can reduce joint and muscle pain. Prolonged use daily may contribute to rebound pain and perpetuate the pain. Consider use of combination of analgesic and muscle relaxant in evening.



## Exercises for TMJ, Jaw, and Temple Pain

There are 3 types of exercise that can improve muscle and joint healing and pain: 1) Stretching; 2) Posture; 3) Relaxation. These need to be performed about 6 times per day for 6 times each.

### Stretching

**Goal:** Gently stretch your jaw to improve range of motion and comfort

- Daily:**
- Place one finger between your front teeth for a count to 20: rest and repeat 6 times
  - Place 1 knuckle widths between your front teeth for a count to 20: rest and repeat 6 times,
  - Progress to 2 fingers width and then 2 knuckles width
  - Progress to 3 fingers width

- Tips:**
- Spread sessions out over the day.
  - Try to avoid pain in stretching
  - Do this exercise after you notice yourself clenching or tensing
  - Use cold ice or moist heat on the jaw before and after exercising

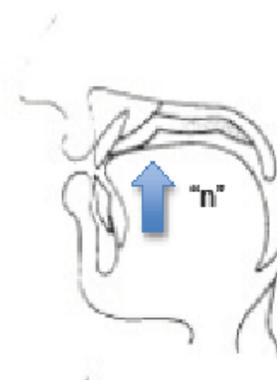


### Posture

**Goal:** Achieve a balanced posture of your jaw to reduce muscle clenching and strain and improve healing

- Daily:**
- Gently put your tongue on the palate where you say "n"
  - Let your jaw relax by letting it drop open slightly
  - Take a slow, deep breath out of your nose to breath

- Tips:**
- Do this throughout the day
  - Do this when you notice yourself clenching or tensing
  - Breathe using your nose throughout the day



### Relaxation

**Goal:** Achieve a relaxed position of your jaw to improve healing and comfort

- Daily:**
- Let your jaw relax (i.e. drop/sag jaw) and Keep your tongue up
  - Use your fingers to put pressure on the jaw while you let it open
  - Gently massage the muscle with a circular motion
  - Do this on the jaw and temple muscles or other muscles

- Tips:**
- Take a slow, deep breath out of your nose as you do this
  - Do this when you notice yourself clenching or tensing
  - Use a gentle force that is not painful
  - Learn and practice relaxation and abdominal breathing

