

Dental Associates of Maitland, P.A.
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Temporomandibular Joint/Muscle Dysfunction
Home Care Instructions

We have begun to treat your temporomandibular joint/muscle dysfunction. Our success will depend in large part upon the way you treat these injured areas. The following instructions will greatly enhance the correction and healing of this area. These few simple rules can easily allow you to avoid such jaw movements that might reinjure your joints, muscles or ligaments.

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 (1/2 inch).
2. Avoid eating hard crusts of bread, tough meat, raw vegetables or any other food that will require prolonged chewing. Do not chew peanuts, ice cubes or any other substance that is repeatedly milled between your back teeth. Do not chew gum, bite your lips, clench your teeth or habitually chew the insides of your cheeks. Avoid thrusting your lower jaw forward, as when biting off a piece of thread, applying lipstick, and smoking or through force of habit. Avoid chewing any food with your front teeth. Select foods which are softer or easier to chew. A low fat diet should be maintained due to the fact the fats produce acids and are hard to digest. Therefore, milk, cream and eggs should be avoided because of their high fat content. It is important to stay on a high protein diet. It may be advisable to take a multiple vitamin preparation to insure adequate vitamin intake. Prepare foods by boiling, broiling, baking or pressure cooking. Do not fry.
3. Make every effort not to strain your jaw joints unnecessarily by such activities as talking excessively, deliberately popping your jaw joint as one would pop the knuckles of his hand, leaning on the palm of your hand while reading or watching TV, etc. If you must yawn, limit the distance your mouth opens by pulling your lower lip up over the edges of lower teeth. Avoid talking on the phone with the same ear every time. Alternate sides. Hold the phone with your hand, not your shoulder.
4. Sleep on your back. Avoid sleeping on the side of your face or on your fist. Maintain a pillow under your knees bending your legs. Sew three tennis balls between two tee-shirts for the sides and front. It will remind you if you turn in your sleep.
5. During all times of occupational, martial or academic stress and also while waiting to fall asleep at night, say to yourself, "lips together, teeth apart", over and over again.
6. Try not to do strenuous work or lift items weighing more than 10 pounds above your waist because when your jaw muscles and jaw joints are out of balance, your body is out of balance and your pains will probably increase due to the imbalance. Avoid activities that require one or both arms over your head (i.e., sleeping with hands over head, washing or painting ceilings, reaching for overhead items, etc.)