

## **TMJ (Temporomandibular Joint) Disorders**

Your doctor has diagnosed with TMJ, a problem with the jaw joint. This complex joint is located just in front of the ear and can cause a variety of problems. Some of the wide variety of complaints due to TMJ include:

- Ear pain
- Trouble opening the mouth
- Headaches & neck pain as well as jaw locking and popping

Some of the causes of TMJ include:

- Over use of the jaw (Frequent chewing of gum, ice, or hard/chewy foods)
- Grinding of the teeth (Bruxism)
- Stress (and jaw muscle clenching)
- Chewing asymmetrically
- Muscle spasms
- Recent dental work
- Mis-alignment of the teeth
- Arthritis of the jaw joint

Most of the time, this can be treated conservatively with the following measures:

- Hot compresses (wet or dry heat) to the painful area 3 times/day
- Soft diet (avoid foods that are chewy or crunchy- i.e. steaks, french bread (hard crust), chewy candies, etc)
- No chewing gum
- Avoid sleeping positions where pressure is put on the jaw to one side or the other
- Anti-inflammatory medicines: These include ibuprofen (Advil), naprosyn (Alleve), and celecoxib(Celebrex). Ibuprofen and naprosyn are available over the counter. In some cases, your doctor may give you a prescription.

Often people have habits which contribute to the TMD such as chewing (gum or food) preferentially on one side of the mouth or clenching the teeth while concentrating or under stress. Pay attention and see if you have any of these habits, and try to break them. Most cases of TMJ will resolve with 2 weeks of the above therapies. If your symptoms do not improve, further therapies sometimes include jaw splints, dental work to improve teeth malignment, or even surgery. If your case of TMJ is related to recent stressors in your life, working to help address those things will also help your TMJ resolve.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any additional questions or problems regarding your diagnosis.