

## **TEMPOROMANDIBULAR JOINT/ MUSCLE DYSFUNCTION (TMJ)**

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**TMJ Therapy -- 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:**

1. For the next few months, be sure to cut all foods into small. Chew small bites softly and slowly.  
Try to avoid opening your mouth any wider than the thickness of your thumb (½ inch).
2. Do not clench, grind teeth, suck on cheeks, press your tongue forcefully against your teeth or roof of mouth.
3. Do not eat hard crust bread, tough meat, raw vegetables, or any other foods that will require prolonged chewing.
4. Do not chew peanuts, ice cubes, gum, bite your lips or chew on anything that requires forceful/prolonged chewing on back teeth.
5. Do not chew gum, bite your lips, clench your teeth or habitually chew the insides of your cheeks.
6. Do not thrust your lower jaw forward as when biting off a piece of thread, applying lipstick, smoking or through force of habit.
7. Do not bite any food with your front teeth.
8. If you must yawn, limit the distance your mouth opens by pulling your lower lip up over the edges of your lower teeth or by pushing up under your chin with your fist clenched.
9. Make every effort not to strain your jaw joints unnecessarily by such activities as talking excessively, deliberately popping your jaw joint, leaning on the palm of your hand while reading or watching TV, etc...
10. Avoid talking on the phone with the same ear every time. Alternate ears! Hold the phone with your hand and not your shoulder.
11. Sit and stand with a straight back and "good" posture.
12. Warm clothes or heating pads applied to the face, ice on the face, massage, drinking cold water and putting ice under your tongue with help with pain control and/or will ease muscle tension
13. Take Over-the Counter Ibuprofen (Motrin, Aleve or Advil) 600mg every 6 hours as needed for pain (provided that your medical history and current medications permit you to take Ibuprofen. If you are not sure, ask your doctor).

### **TMJ Exercises:**

1. **Tongue Relaxation:** Clean teeth softly with your tongue for a few minutes a day.
2. **Cheek Relaxation:** Put air into your cheeks for about 5 seconds and release (about 3 times).
3. **Massages:** (A couple minutes of each massage).
  - A. Thumb between cheek and teeth, fingers on side of face near the ear, slide fingers own and forward over the painful area for a couple minutes 5 times a day.
  - B. Fingers on Temple (side of head) slide fingers down and forward.  
Allow mouth to open slightly for a couple minutes 5 times a day.
  - C. Place index finger under your tongue and slide back toward throat, press downward 2 times 3 to 4 times a day.
  - D. Place index finger under your tongue, slide backward toward throat, press down and outward 2 times 3 to 4 times a day.

### **LEARNING TO USE YOUR BITEGUARD (BITEGUARD/ NIGHTGUARD/ BITESPLINT re all the same thing)**

1. Please be patient and expect that it will take a few weeks before your bite guard will really feel that it is a part of your body.
2. Speech -- if you have difficulty pronouncing certain words, practice reading them aloud and you will soon master the correct pronunciation.
3. Remove Bite Guard to Eat and/or Drink.
4. Swallow frequently at first until your saliva amount goes back to normal.
5. Only wear the bite guard a **MAXIMUM of 18 hours a day (Never wear 24 hours a day)!!**  
Wear when sleeping, driving for more than 20 minutes or working on the computer for more than 20 minutes.
6. When you notice yourself clenching your teeth, Tell yourself "**Lips Together and Teeth Apart**" and then actually do it!!
7. Always bring your bite guard to your dental check-ups to be checked and adjusted.

### **CLEANING AND CARE OF YOUR BITE GUARD**

1. Your mouth and your bite guard must be kept as clean as possible all the time.. Failure to do this may result in damage to your natural teeth and gums. Use normal toothpaste 2 times a day to clean the bite guard. You can also dip or rinse the biteguard in Listerine Mouthwash! When cleaning biteguard lay biteguard flat on a towel on the countertop and brush while on countertop. Gently rinse and pat dry. DO NOT grasp both sides of the biteguard at the same time or biteguard will fracture in the front teeth section of the biteguard.
- \* **While brushing/cleaning biteguard DO NOT hold biteguard in palm of hand so to NOT squeeze the sides of the biteguard. Squeezing the sides of the biteguard will cause the front of the biteguard to fracture in half.**
2. Do **NOT** soak, clean or store your bite guard in any type of bleach products. This will make the bite guard brittle and cause it to break easily.
3. It is not necessary to soak the bite guard in anything when not in use.
4. Rinse mouth with warm salt water after removing to keep bacteria down.
- \* **DO NOT drop biteguard on hard surfaces (such as countertops, floors etc) for the biteguard will fracture.**
- \* **Keep Biteguard away from animals. Animals think they are chew toys and will destroy them!**