

Marquis Family and Sedation Dentistry

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TMD SELF-CARE THERAPIES

Dr. Marquis has determined that you have temporomandibular disorder which is often referred to as TMD. The “T” in TMD stands for the temple, “M” for mandible or jaw and “D” for a disorder within the complex. This disorder is usually due to an overuse of this system.

We use this system for many activities (talking, eating, yawning, and laughing) and when we are not engaged in these, we need to allow our jaw muscles and joints to reduce the TMD pain you are having:

1. Apply heat, ice or a combination of heat and ice to the painful areas, most people prefer heat but if that increases your pain, use the combination or just the ice.
 - a. Use the heat for 20 minutes 2-4 times each day. Some patient prefer to use moist heat while others find dry heat just as effective and less of a hassle. Moist heat can be obtained by wetting a towel with very warm water. It can be kept warm by wrapping it around a hot water bottle or placing a piece of plastic wrap and heating pad over it. It can be rewarmed in a microwave oven or under the very warm water.
 - b. Apply ice wrapped in a thin washcloth to the painful area until you first feel some numbness then remove it (usually takes about 10 minutes).
 - c. Use the combination of heat and ice 2-4 times each day. Apply heat for approximately 5 minutes (shorter if it aggravates your pain) then apply then apply and ice cubed wrapped in a thin washcloth. Repeat this sequence 2-3 times.
2. Eat soft foods like casseroles, canned fruit, soup, eggs, and yogurt. DO NOT chew gum or eat hard (raw carrots) or chewy foods (caramels, steak, bagels). Cut other food into small pieces; evenly divide the food on both sides of your mouth and chew on both sides.
3. Rest your jaw muscles by keeping your teeth apart and practicing good posture.
 - a. Your teeth should NEVER touch except lightly when you swallow. Closely monitor yourself for the habit of clenching that you may have developed. People will often do this when they are driving or concentrating. Try keeping your jaw relaxed by placing your tongue behind your upper front teeth, having your jaw in a comfortable position with your teeth apart and relaxing your jaw muscles.
 - b. Good head, neck and back posture help you to have good jaw posture. Try to hold head up straight and use a small pillow or rolled towel to support your lower back. Avoid habits as resting your jaw on your hand or cradling the telephone against your shoulder.
4. Avoid caffeine, because it stimulates your muscles to contract and hold more tension in them. Caffeine or caffeine-like drugs are in coffee, tea, most sodas, and chocolate. Decaffeinated coffee also has some caffeine, while Sanka has none.

5. Avoid sleeping habits that strain your jaw muscles and joints, by not sleeping on your stomach and if you sleep on your side, keeping your neck and jaw aligned.
6. Refrain from opening your mouth wide, such as yawning, yelling, or prolonged dental procedures.
7. Avoid habits that strain jaw muscles or joints, such as clenching, grinding, or resting your teeth together; biting your cheek, lips, or objects you put in your mouth; pushing your against your teeth or holding your jaw in an uncomfortable or tense position.
8. Use anti-inflammatory and pain reducing medications such as ibuprofen (Motrin), Naproxen (Aleve), Ketoprofen(Orudis KT), Tylenol, aspirin, and Percogesic to reduce joint and muscle pain. Avoid those with caffeine, i.e. Anacin, Excedrin, or Vanquish.

There is no “cure” for TMD and you may need to follow these instructions for the rest of your life. Dr. Marquis may suggest other therapies in addition to these instructions. No single therapy has been shown to be totally effective for TMD and a percentage of patients receiving occlusal splints report no improvement. Based on your symptoms and identified contributing factors, an individualized treatment approach will be recommended and it may be revised as your symptom response is observed.