

# TMJ TMD

## TMD is Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction

TMD is commonly miscalled “TMJ,” which is the name of the joint. Normally everyone has two TMJs, one on the left and one on the right. The dysfunction of the joint can occur on one side or both, sometimes more severe on one than the other. This joint is different than all others in the body in that it is bilateral, that is one side can be affected by the other side because they are directly connected by the mandible (“jaw bone”). Since the head, neck, shoulders and back can be included in this dysfunction, a broader term can be craniomandibular dysfunction since other muscles and the neck can also be involved.

The jaw bone (mandible) has two rotating joint “heads”, called a condyle, that fits into a “socket” called a fossa. This arrangement has a complex attachment of muscles, ligaments, connective tissue, joint spaces and fluid. The function of the joints is complex and is the only bilateral joint in the body, i.e., when one joint moves the other joint is affected. These actions of the joint can be disrupted by many things, such as a soccer ball to the head, a fall off a bicycle (even as a child and unnoticed for years), automobile accidents, arthritis, dental malocclusion (“bad bite”), recent dental work, including wisdom tooth/teeth extractions, and many, many more.

Symptoms of TMD include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Popping and/or Clicking of the joint when opening and/or closing
- A “crunching” sound (called Crepitus) from the joint
- Limited opening, usually with pain
- Pain on opening, closing, and/or both
- Inability to close completely, with or without pain
- Teeth hitting harder in one or more areas of the mouth, tooth wear, tooth mobility, tooth pulpitis (root canal therapy treatment), broken/fractured teeth or crown restorations
- Loss of function, inability to chew without pain
- Cannot “find” a Bite with the teeth
- Muscle pain – head, neck, shoulders, and back
- Pain around and behind the eyes
- Headache pain – migraine, temple headaches, etc.
- Ear pain – sharp pain near the ear (but not related to the ear, just located near it), ringing, buzzing, humming, and/or hissing
- Neck and/or shoulder pain – limited movement, stiffness
- Any or all of the above!!

Correct diagnosis is important in effective treatment. A thorough dental and medical history and review of medications is a start. A thorough dental exam, including any “x-rays” (radiographs) and sometimes 3D images (called Cone Beam Computerized

Tomography, called a CBCT) helps determine boney changes in the joints. Diagnostic casts (models of your teeth) should be made (if possible, depending on the severity of the problem) and those casts mounted on an articulator, a device that mimics the functional movements of the jaw, and an analysis made. In addition, we also make a bite force analysis that can help determine if the teeth are hitting properly.

Treatment should be conservative and focus on calming the muscles and pain, as well as balancing the forces on the teeth to help balance the joint function. When there is a problem with the joints there is usually inflammation. Many/most instances require additional therapy to calm the muscles and remove the inflammation. Very tight muscles can develop “trigger points” and these are had to calm down without physical therapy. Many times, over-the-counter (OTC) supplements and/or lotions are recommended to aid in reducing this inflammation.

The focus of care is:

- Reducing and/or removing your pain
- Reducing and/or eliminating inflammation
- Increasing circulation to the muscles
- Increasing lymphatic drainage, critical to reducing inflammation
- Calming and Stabilizing the muscles
- Restoring the balance and harmony of the joints and teeth into normal function

Since this topic is very large, and broad, until you have been evaluated, at least through a screening consult, what your diagnosis may be and what treatment would be indicated cannot be determined, as each case may be similar, but always has individual components. Therefore, your treatment plan will be individualized to you based on your clinical presentation. Ultimately we want to educate you on the nature of the problem and stabilize you, as well as put the control of treating this in your hands.

**If you have any questions about TMD, please feel free to ask us.**