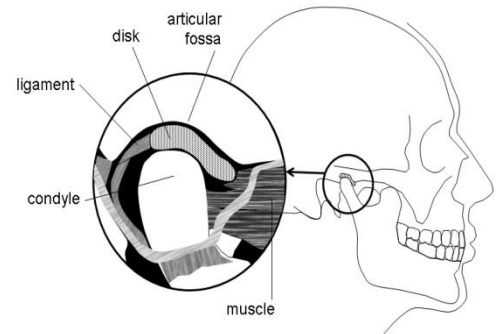


## Orthodontic Department

# Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (TMD)

### What are Temporomandibular Joints?

- These are **small joints** which are situated in **front of each ear** and attach the lower jaw to the skull
- The joint is made up of **two bones** that are **separated by a disc of cartilage**
- **Ligaments** and many **muscles surround the joint**
- These allow you to **open and close your mouth**, as well as talk, eat and swallow.



### What is TMD?

- TMD is persistent **pain and/or clicking** from the jaw joints
- This may affect **one or both jaw joints**
- Some patients **experience**:
  - **Buzzing in the ears**
  - **Earache**
  - **Facial pain**
  - **Headaches**

### How common is TMD?

- This is a **common problem** and may affect up to **50%** of the population
- It may last a **few days, or many years**
- It is likely that once you have **this problem it may come and go**.

### Can TMD be cured?

- We are **not able to cure TMD**, but we are able to provide you with **simple measures to take to manage the problem** if it flares up
- Pain and clicking do not mean that the jaw joints are damaged and that you will develop more severe jaw joint problems in later life
- Treatment focuses on learning how to manage the symptoms.

### What causes these symptoms?

- **Pain** may be caused by the **muscles** in and around the jaw **tightening up (muscle spasm)**
  - Sometimes muscle spasms may **occur while** you are **sleeping**, so you are **not aware of it happening** until you awake feeling pain (may be due to you grinding your teeth in your sleep)
  - The tightening of these muscles may also be the **result** of how you **deal with stress**



- **Joint noise (clicking)** occurs if the **disc moves out** of its **normal position**
  - Most commonly the **disc slips forward**, and a noise is made when it returns to its normal position
- **Common causes**
  - **Clenching** or grinding
  - **Habits** eg biting nails, chewing gum, chewing pens and biting off Sellotape®
  - Concentration, anxiety, physical and psychological stress (exam times)
  - **Trauma** or injury to the jaw
  - **Facial deformities.**

### How do I relieve my discomfort?

- Treatment aims to **reduce the workload of the muscles**, which will allow the joint and muscles to settle down.

### Simple Steps to Manage Your TMD

- **Restrict mouth opening** to no more than two finger widths
- **Prevent** yourself from **opening** your mouth **wide when yawning** by placing a hand under your chin to **support your jaw**
- Identify and **stop any habits** including clenching or grinding. (Remember this may be a 'subconscious' action and difficult to stop)
- **Do not bite with your front teeth** eg chewing finger nails or cutting Sellotape® with your front teeth
- **Chew** evenly with your **back teeth**, using both sides
- **Avoid foods that require wide mouth opening** such as crusty bread or apples
- **Cut your food into small pieces** for ease of chewing
- Applying **heat to the area** may be **helpful**, twice daily (morning and evening). This may be a **hot water bottle wrapped in a towel**, or a heat pad purchased from a chemist. Take care not to burn yourself
- **Anti-inflammatory medication** such as Ibuprofen can sometimes **help to ease discomfort**. This can be either in tablet or gel form
- **Pain relieving medication such as Paracetamol** may be used in the short term
- It may be useful to consider learning some **relaxation techniques** to control stress and tension.

### What happens if these measures do not help?

- In most circumstances, these **simple steps are enough to relieve most symptoms** (more than 90% of our patients)
- **Where** these steps **do not improve your symptoms**, we may wish to **investigate your symptoms further**. We would refer you to our Maxillofacial Team for this to be undertaken.

It is important to realise that jaw joint problems, **although a nuisance, are not sinister** and **may return**, these **simple measures can be safely repeated** if this is the case.

## Follow us

- On Instagram



## Contact Numbers

We hope you have found this information useful, but if you have any questions or are worried about anything, please speak to the following Dorset County Hospital Staff:

**Orthodontic Department: 01305 255174**

## About this leaflet:

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