

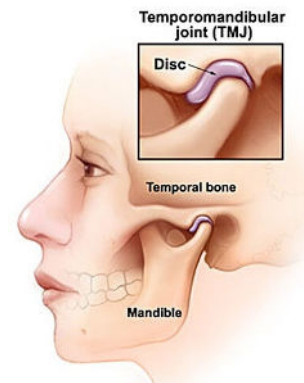
Otolaryngology

Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction (TMJ)

You may not have heard of it, but you use it hundreds of times every day. It is the Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ), the joint where the mandible (the lower jaw) joins the temporal bone of the skull, immediately in front of the ears on each side of your head. A small disc of cartilage separates the bones, much like in the knee joint, so that the mandible may slide easily; each time you chew you move it. You also move it every time you talk and each time you swallow (every 3 minutes or so). It is, therefore, one of the most frequently used of all joints of the body one of the most complex.

You can locate this joint by putting your finger on the triangular structure in front of your ear. Then move your finger just slightly forward and press firmly while you open your jaw all the way and shut it. The motion you feel is the TMJ. You can also feel the joint motion in your ear canal.

A very common focus of TMJ pain is in the ear. Many patients come to the ear specialist quite convinced their pain is from an ear infection. When the earache is not associated with a hearing loss and the eardrum looks normal, the doctor will consider the possibility that the pain comes from a TMJ dysfunction.



Your physician has diagnosed temporomandibular joint dysfunction and recommends the following treatment:

1. Dry heat to the area in front of the ear corresponding to the TMJ 4 times a day
2. A soft diet for one week. Avoid foods that are difficult to chew such as meat or chicken.
Also, avoid use of any chewing gum
3. An anti-inflammatory medication such as Motrin, Advil, or Aspirin
4. A Dental evaluation for sizing and placement of a bite guard to be used while you are sleeping. Please let us know if you need a referral.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any question or concerns regarding your medical or surgical care



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