

TMJ Self Help Instructions

1. Please keep in mind that your oral appliance is not a cure in itself; rather, this appliance is a tool that will help us to learn more about your problem and will help you to manage your pain or discomfort.
2. During the day, please be aware of your jaw and jaw muscles. Do not: clench or grind your teeth, bite your lips or cheeks, slide your jaw from side to side or thrust it forward. **Make a conscience effort to relax your jaws.** Place Post-it notes with the letters **LTTAR (Lips Together Teeth Apart Relax)** in areas that you frequent often such as your office desk, car, home. Repeat this saying to yourself and try and make your jaw muscles relax.
3. Try moist heat, ice packs, alternating heat and ice, manual massage, or gentle jaw stretching exercises (especially in the shower with hot water splashing on your jaw muscles). *All patients are different*; therefore, try and discover what makes **your** jaw and muscles feel better. Please notify the doctor of any findings.
4. Please take a multivitamin every day. All females should take a formula with excess **Calcium**.
5. Medications:
6. **Do not allow the stress in your life to build up.** Vent your stress or anger externally. Light aerobic exercise such as walking, bicycling, or jogging are excellent for relieving stress.
7. Follow all recommendations of other professionals such as family physicians, chiropractors or physical therapists that you may be seeing for your condition. *Please keep in mind that many TMJ problems are multifactorial and multiple treatment regimens may be necessary to help you.*
8. Avoid opening your mouth wide during yelling, talking, or **yawning**. Place a fist under your jaw to support it during yawning.
9. **Be sure to get adequate sleep.** The best sleeping position is flat on your back without hands or fists curled under the jaw. Try to sleep with your fingers stretched out and not in a fist. This will help you to relax. **Avoid sleeping on your jaw or face.**
10. **Avoid long periods in the same position, especially if the jaw and face are involved.** For example: holding the phone between your shoulder and ear, staring at a computer or TV screen for extended periods, looking or working above your head for long periods. Every twenty minutes you should stretch and relax.
11. **STOP SMOKING** and reduce alcohol intake.
12. Avoid heavy carrying, pushing, or lifting which would **strain** jaw, neck, or back muscles.
13. *Realize that jaw/muscle problems are psycho-physiological in nature, meaning related to stress plus injury or abnormality. Reducing tension and external stress in your life will be of great benefit.*

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