

TMJ Symptoms:

- Clicking or popping of the jaw joints
- Pain in or around the jaw joints
- Locking or limited opening of your mouth.
- Headaches
- Pain behind the eyes
- Dizziness
- Earaches or ringing of the ears
- Clenching or grinding of the teeth
- Neck, shoulder or back pain.
- Numbness or tingling of the fingers.

Treatment:

Typically, treatment will involve several phases. The first goal is to relieve the muscle spasm and pain. Then, your dentist must correct the way the teeth fit together. A device known as an orthotic or splint is worn over the teeth until the bite is stabilized. Permanent correction may involve selective re-shaping of the teeth, building crowns on the teeth, orthodontics or a permanent appliance.

TMJ/Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction Syndrome

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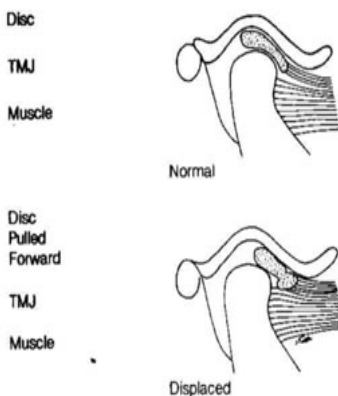
“TMJ” and Dental Health

TMJ Dysfunction is a popular term to describe a disorder of the jaw joints or the muscles that control the joints. Various terms are used to describe this disorder. TMJ stands for Temporomandibular Joints. These are the two joints that connect your jaw to your skull. When these joints are out of place, they can cause many problems. Muscle spasm goes hand-in-hand with displaced jaw joints. Because the nerves and muscles are so complex in this area, when these muscles are in spasm the problems can be far-reaching.

The structures that make it possible to open and close your mouth include the bones, joints, and muscles. These are very specialized and must work together whenever you chew, speak, or swallow.

There are various ways this system can be disrupted, such as accidents involving a blow to the face or a whiplash. Yet the most common cause of TMJ relates to your teeth and your bite. If your bite isn't right, it can affect both the muscles and the joints. Your upper and lower teeth need to come together in a way that provides the proper bracing support for your jaw against your skull. An improper bite can result from a missing tooth, misaligned teeth or back teeth, which are too “short.” Your upper and lower teeth must come together firmly each time you swallow. When your bite is unstable your muscles must work extra hard. This extra work makes them shortened and stiff.

The position of your teeth can also affect the position of your jaw joints. Each jaw joint is a ball and socket joint. When functioning properly, the ball and socket do not actually touch because a thin disc of cartilage rides between them. The disc acts as a cushion and allows the joint to move smoothly. Each disc is held in place and guided by muscle. If your bite is not right, the joint is pulled out of alignment. An unstable bite can cause both jaw joint displacement and muscle strain and pain. When this condition is prolonged, the body begins to compensate and adapt by involving muscles in the neck, back, and even sometimes those of the arms, fingers, pelvis, legs and feet.



Jaw Joint Disc Displacement

