

# Services

## Jaw Pain/TMJ

Do you suffer from headaches, grinding of your teeth, clicking of your jaw or even ear pain? These can all be signs of Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) syndrome, also known as the temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJD). This is a disorder of the jaw muscles and nerves caused by injury to the TMJ, which is the joint between your jaw and skull. The injured temporomandibular joint leads to pain with chewing, clicking, and popping of the jaw; swelling on the sides of the face; nerve inflammation; headaches; tooth grinding; and sometimes dislocation of the temporomandibular joint.

With moderate treatment and physical therapy, the severity of TMJ symptoms can be decreased without the use of dental implants or medications.

## What causes TMJ syndrome?

Multiple factors contribute to the muscle tightness and dysfunction that characterize this condition. Most often, poor posture and neck alignment change the pull of the muscles that make your jaw move. This causes painful grinding and irritation of the TMJ. Other causes may include:

- Poor alignment of or trauma to the teeth or jaw
- Teeth grinding
- Poor posture
- Stress
- Arthritis or other inflammatory musculoskeletal disorders
- Excessive gum chewing

A lot can be done to help TMJ, first starting with a thorough evaluation of your problem with our expert physical therapist. Once the root cause of your problem has been discovered, a comprehensive plan can be developed to quickly relieve your pain and restore natural movement to your TMJ. Furthermore, your physical therapist will teach you techniques for regaining normal jaw movement for long lasting results.

The focus of physical therapy for TMJ is relaxation, stretching, and releasing tight muscles and scar tissue. Physical therapy can also be an especially important part of recovery from TM joint surgery, as it helps minimize scar tissue formation and muscle tightness.

## Physical therapy techniques may include:

- Jaw exercises to strengthen muscles and improve flexibility and range of motion.
- Heat therapy to improve blood circulation in the jaw.
- Ice therapy to reduce swelling and relieve pain.
- **Manual Therapy** techniques to improve soft tissue and muscle tension may include:
  - ◆ deep tissue massage
  - ◆ soft tissue massage
  - ◆ Cupping
  - ◆ Dry needling
  - ◆ IASTM

- Instruction in Self Care, Education and Training: Self myofascial release instruction, postural education to improve posture and correct jaw alignment; home exercises to improve and maintain physical therapy benefits.
- Mobilization/Movement of the TMJ to release scar tissue that restricts muscle movement and to improve range of motion.
- Education in Stress Management
- Education in joint preservation techniques—eating habits

Although a referral is not necessary, please **consult** with your dentist at Avon, CT Center to see if he or she would like Physical Therapy as an option for your TMJ pain.