

## TMD HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

*Please try to follow these important home care instructions. There can be an indefinite number of factors contributing to jaw dysfunction. It is easily possible that this guide has overlooked a factor that is important in your problem. Please advise us of anything that you think may be contributing. Your input is important.*

### **Awareness of Habits or Jaw Use Patterns:**

- The teeth are supposed to make contact during eating and swallowing, but at no other time. When the jaw is not working during eating, swallowing, yawning and talking, the teeth should be apart and the jaw should be at rest.
- Notice any contact your teeth make.
- Notice any positions your jaw continually returns to.
- Notice any clenching, grinding, gritting, tapping of teeth or tensing of jaw muscles.
- Notice when tooth contact or the jaw muscle tensing most often occurs. Typical instances include during driving, studying, reading, social situations, conversation, fatigue, overwork, stress, emotional upsets, work or sports.
- Be aware of whether you are able to eat on both sides.
- Position the jaw to minimize tooth contacting habit.
- Place the tip of the tongue just behind the top front teeth and keep the teeth slightly apart. Maintain this position whenever the jaw is not being used.

### **Diet Modifications:**

- Softer foods place less stress on the jaw muscles and joints than coarser foods.
- Avoid eating coarse, hard foods that require you to bite into them with the front teeth, such as apples, or sandwiches. Cut these foods up into small pieces and eat them on the back teeth.
- Do not chew gum or soft chewy foods that require excessive jaw movements.

### **Avoid Wide Jaw Openings:**

- Excessive movements of the jaw will place stress on the joint and the muscles.
- **DO NOT TEST THE JAW!**
- You may want to periodically move your jaw around to check whether you are usually open and swing the jaw from side to side beyond the comfortable range of motion. When you move your jaw to the point where you produce pain and discomfort, you have added to the stress on your muscles and joints and this can cause continuation of the problems you are trying to eliminate.

### **Sleep Patterns:**

- Avoid sleeping on your stomach, which places the jaw in a position where considerable pressure is placed upon it. Propping pillows beside you may be helpful in avoiding unconsciously moving onto your stomach. This can be a difficult pattern to break.
- Avoid sleeping positions where the jaw is rested upon a hand or arm, which also applies considerable pressure to the jaw.

### **Support the Jaw During Yawning:**

- Place your index finger and thumb on your chin to provide some extra stability to the lower jaw during yawning.

### **Incidental:**

- Avoid leaning on your chin or jaw at any time. This even applies to posturing your head to press a telephone against your shoulder.
- Do not rest your chin in your hand while sitting at a desk, applying excessive pressure on your jaw.

### **Use of Moist Heat or Ice:**

- Moist heat: Place a warm, damp towel along the side of your face. Place a hot water bottle over the top of the damp towel. Maintain this for 15 -20 minutes.
- Ice: Place a gel pack or bag of frozen peas or corn along the side of your face (do not place cold pack directly on your skin, always use a paper towel or thin cloth next to your skin). Maintain this for 15-20 minutes.
- Generally, ice is applied for an acute injury (a recent injury which often produces severe pain and swelling). The effect of ice application is to reduce pain and swelling (it has an analgesic, or numbing effect). Heat is applied for pain reduction and muscle relaxation, and is used for nonacute conditions.

### **Medication:**

- Ibuprofen: 600 mg every 4-6 hrs.

*If symptoms do not subside, the following treatment may be considered:*

- Short course of a muscle relaxant [cyclobenzaprine 10 mg three times a day, for 5-7 days].
- Referral to TMD physiotherapist