

Self-Care Tips for Patients with TMJ Discomfort

- **Rest the Muscle and Joints around the TMJ.** This will allow healing. Rest includes eating soft foods, avoiding crunchy and chew foods such as hard nuts, chips, carrots, and hard breads.
- **Avoid chewing gum.**
- **AVOID Clenching and Grinding:** Learn to say, “teeth apart, face and jaw relaxed.”
- **AVIOD Opening Too Wide:** This protects the joints, preventing them from locking open, and includes **controlling yawns** (limit how far your mouth opens during a yawn, so that you are forced to yawn against pressure) and **eating small bites.**
- **Avoid Long dental appointments:** Take frequent rest during ALL dental appointments.
- **APPLY Cold:** For severe pain, new injuries (less than 72 hours), and reinjured areas, apply cold for 5-10 minutes.
- **APPLY Moist Heat:** To promote healing, apply moist heat for 20 minutes for mild moderate pain to increase circulation and muscle relaxation.
- **Massage the Jaw and Temple Muscles:** This action stimulates circulation, relaxes muscles and decreases soreness.
- **Maintain Good Posture:** Avoid a forward head posture which may increase jaw and neck muscle activity and soreness.
- **Hold the Phone:** Do not cradle the phone; it irritates jaw and neck muscles.
- **Sleep On Your Side:** Lie on your side with a pillow between your neck and shoulders and a soft support along the face and jaw, or sleep on your back with the neck curve supported.
- **Exercise Regularly:** Exercise 3-4 times a week, for 20-30-minute intervals. Choose low-impact type exercise to minimize pressure on the joints.
- **Practice Stress Reduction:** Strive to reduce stress in your life. **11. EAT WELL.** Good nutrition promotes joint and muscle healing.
- **Use Athletic Mouthguards:** These guards may provide temporary pain relief until you are able to consult your dentist.