

JAW JOINT EXERCISES

Exercises to improve the function of the temporomandibular (jaw) joint (T.M.J.) and the muscles of mastication.

The purpose of the exercise is to prevent clicking of the jaw joint and to strengthen the muscles which pull the jaw backwards. This in turn will relax the muscles which close the mouth and will prevent those muscles which pull the jaw forward and to one side, from functioning. The jaw joint will act more as a hinge and this will take the strain off it.

Set aside two five-minute periods each day at a time when you are relaxed and have nothing on your mind. One good time is just before you are going to bed and another perhaps when you get home from work. Sit upright on a chair and carry out the following manoeuvres:

- Close your mouth on your back teeth, resting the tip of your tongue on your palate just behind the upper front teeth.
- Run the tip of your tongue backwards onto the soft palate as far back as it will go, keeping your teeth together.
- Force the tongue back to maintain contact with the soft palate and slowly open your mouth until you feel your tongue just being pulled away from it. Do not try to open your mouth further. Keep it in this position for five seconds and then close your mouth. Relax for five seconds.
- Repeat this manoeuvre slowly over the next five minutes in a firm but relaxed fashion.

As you open your mouth you should feel tension in the muscles at the back of your jaw and beneath your chin. For the first few times you do the exercise you should check in front of a mirror that the lower teeth move vertically downwards and do not deviate even slightly from side to side. If the exercise is being carried out correctly, there will be neither clicks nor noise from the joints – if there is, you must be making some error when carrying out the exercise.

Do this exercise no more than the recommended amount for the first week. Initially it may seem to make your pain worse but this will be as a result of the unaccustomed exercise. Thereafter, do the exercise as often as you can and this will help to strengthen the ligaments around your jaw joints and rest the muscles which close your mouth.

If the exercise is carried out correctly and regularly over a two or three week period, you will retrain your muscles so that your jaw opens and closes smoothly without clicks or jerks, and any pain you have been experiencing will subside.

REMEMBER

- Never bite your fingernails
- Never bite your lower lip
- Avoid biting on your front teeth
- Keep your upper and lower teeth apart when at rest

Any queries at all please call us on 01753 634074 – 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

If you would like a copy of this leaflet on audiotape, in large print or translated, please telephone 01753 634398

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