

Home Care for Jaw and Joint Problems (TMJ or TMD)

- **Sleeping on your back:** In order to sleep on your back the natural curvature of the spine must be preserved. Place a pillow underneath your knees and wither a small pillow or a rolled up towel underneath your neck for support. In certain cases we may recommend that you purchase a special pillow on which to sleep.
- **Application of moist heat:** Apply to the areas that ache using a heating pad that supplies moist heat or a dry heating pad in combination with a moist towel. Do this for periods of twenty minutes twice each day.
- **Limit the intake of sugar, caffeine, and nicotine:** Sugar and caffeine are stimulants to the nervous system that results in increased muscle activity. In most cases, we are trying to rest muscles in order to heal painful spasms. Nicotine causes blood sugar to rise, which again increases muscle activity.
- **Avoid foods that require a lot of chewing:** This includes excessively hard or sticky foods.
- **Avoid clenching your teeth together:** Try to keep in mind during waking hours the phrase "Lips together, teeth apart."
- **Beware of opening your mouth excessively wide:** This tends to stretch muscles and ligaments within the jaw joint beyond their capacity to heal. It is especially helpful to support the lower jaw with your fist underneath your chin while yawning.

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