

Home Care For Facial Pain/TMJ Patients

If you are having temporomandibular joint pain or facial muscle pain/spasms, the following home treatments should help recovery:

1. Take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin or generic) for the pain/discomfort. Do not take Tylenol. You may take 2-3 pills (400-600mg) every 6 hours if the pain is severe, but typically 1 pill (200mg) is sufficient.
2. Ice pack (gel type) on affected area for 20 minutes at bedtime. This is very good for relieving muscle pain and can be used 2-3 times during the day if necessary.
3. First thing in the morning, using hot wash cloths, heat the affected side(s) of your jaw for approximately 10 minutes. Then slowly and gently stretch your mouth open wide and forward. This will loosen your jaw muscles before you use it during the day.
4. Soft diet. Eat foods that are easy to chew. Avoid salads, chewing gum, steaks, etc.
5. If you are grinding or clenching, minimize sugar/caffeine intake. Twenty minutes of aerobic exercise will also help to alleviate stress and burn off energy that you might otherwise use to grind or clench during the night.
6. If you have severe muscle cramps during the day, rest your front teeth together for about five minutes on a piece of paper folded thick enough to keep the back teeth from touching. This should relieve the spasm.
7. If possible, sleep on your back. If you must sleep on your side or stomach, keep the weight of your head on your cheekbone and not your jaw. Never sleep with your hand under your jaw. Poor sleep posture causes a lot of TMJ pain!
8. Poor posture during the day will also cause TMJ and neck pain. Sit with your back straight. Do not lean over where the weight of your head is not directly over your shoulders. Watch your posture especially when working on the computer for long periods of time.

9. Biofeedback mechanisms help. If you find yourself clenching or grinding, remind yourself to relax and try to keep your lips together and teeth apart. Remember, lips together teeth apart. If needed place a folded piece of paper between your teeth.

10. If these measures have not alleviated your pain within a week or two, call our office to schedule an appointment to discuss other treatments or medications which are available.

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