Temporomandibular Disorder

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

What is temporomandibular disorder? Temporomandibular disorder (TMJ) is a condition that causes pain in your jaw and around your ear. The disorder affects the joint between your temporal bone and your mandible (jawbone). The muscles and nerves around the joint are also affected.

What causes a temporomandibular disorder?

- Dislocation of the cartilage disc in the joint
- Deformities of the jaw
- Inflammation, infection, arthritis, muscle problems, or tumors in the jaw area
- Injury to or fracture of the jawbone
- Muscle strain from chewing, teeth clenching or grinding

What are the signs and symptoms of a temporomandibular disorder?

- Popping or grating sound when you open or close your mouth
- Headache or pain in your jaw, ear, neck, or face
- Pain or swelling of the jaw muscles
- Tingling or numbness in the jaw or face
- Trouble opening or closing your mouth, or your jaw locks

How is temporomandibular disorder diagnosed? Your healthcare provider will examine your jaw, face, and neck. He will ask you about your health conditions or injuries. You may also need additional testing. If you've had images made of the joint, please bring them, burned onto a disc, with you to your next appointment.

How is temporomandibular disorder treated?

- Medicines:
  - NSAIDs: These medicines decrease swelling and pain. You can buy NSAIDs without a prescription. Ask your healthcare provider which medicine is right for you, and how much to take. Take as directed. NSAIDs can cause stomach bleeding or kidney problems if not taken correctly.
  - Botox: This may be injected into the muscles of your jaw to decrease pain.
  - Steroid medicine: These may be injected into the joint to decrease pain and swelling.
  - Muscle relaxers: These may help decrease pain and muscle spasms.
• Massage of the joint area.

• Surgery: You may need surgery to fix your teeth, jawbone, or the joint.

• Dental appliances/splints.

• Dental or oral surgery evaluation.

What are the risks of temporomandibular disorder? If left untreated, your condition may worsen. Even if treated, your condition may become chronic and may never completely resolve. Your condition may also recur periodically.

How can I manage my symptoms?

• Eat soft foods: Your healthcare provider may suggest that you eat only soft foods for several days. A dietitian may work with you to find foods that are easier to bite, chew, or swallow. Examples are soup, applesauce, cottage cheese, pudding, yogurt, soft fruits, and mashed potatoes.

• Use jaw supporting devices: Splints may be used to support your jaw or keep it from moving. You may need to wear a mouth guard to keep you from clenching or grinding your teeth while you are sleeping.

• No gum chewing.

• Use ice and heat: Ice helps decrease swelling and pain. Ice may also help prevent tissue damage. Use an ice pack, or put crushed ice in a plastic bag. Cover it with a towel and place it on your jaw for 15 to 20 minutes every hour or as directed. After the first 24 to 48 hours, use heat to decrease pain, swelling, and muscle spasms. Apply heat on the area for 20 to 30 minutes every 2 hours for as many days as directed.

Go to physical therapy: A physical therapist teaches you exercises to help improve movement and strength, and to decrease pain in your jaw. A speech therapist may help you with swallowing and speech exercises.

When should I contact my healthcare provider?

• Your splint or mouth guard is loose.

• You have questions or concerns about your condition or care.

For Questions or Emergency Care:
Please call the office at 601-984-5160. You may need to speak with the doctor on-call.