

TMJ Pain Or TMJ Dysfunction

In the past it has been thought that TMJ Dysfunction (Temporalmandibular Joint Painful Functioning) was caused only from a bad occlusion (the relation of the teeth when the jaw is closed). But then it was discovered that clenching the teeth during times of tension or stress can cause TMJ Dysfunction, which can result in extreme pain in the temple area, down the face in front of the ear, and a feeling of fullness and pressure in the ear and occasional dizziness.

At times, symptoms of TMJ can also be caused by biting on hard food or chewing gum. Children can also suffer from this dysfunction, often manifested as headaches arising due to bruxism (grinding teeth during sleep).

Missing molars are a large contributory factor to TMJ Dysfunction. If molars are missing on both sides, it forces the person to do all the chewing on the front teeth (incisors), causing enormous stress to the jaw joint muscle. If molars are missing on one side, chewing is all done on the opposite side, causing imbalance on the jaw joint, and TMJ dysfunction can result.

It is important to have your bite checked by a dentist because occlusion can play a part in any case of TMJ Dysfunction.

During times of TMJ pain we advise:

1. Use of heating pad to affected area 4 times a day, 15 minutes at a time.
2. Aspirin, Advil, Motrin or Tylenol every 2- 6 hours.
3. No incising. Break off pieces of food and place them in the back of the mouth for the molars to chew.
4. Molar chewing only.
5. Avoid gum chewing, cold drafts to the side of the head, torsion of the jaw (sleeping with the back of the head on the pillow is best).
6. Avoid hard of chewy foods eat a soft diet.
7. If dentures are worn, they should be worn also at night to avoid over-closing the jaw.