

TMJ EXERCISES

The following exercises will help relax the muscles and increase mobility in the jaw joints. These should be done when symptoms are mild. Do not do these when pain is severe, instead the jaw should be rested as much as possible during more painful episodes.

- 1) **Assisted Opening** – Place two fingers on lower front teeth, slowly open as wide as is comfortable while pushing down with your fingers. Repeat 10 times.
- 2) **Registered Opening** - Cup palm underneath chin, open jaw slowly, and gently resist opening with hand under chin. Repeat 10 times.
- 3) **Midline Exercise** - Look in mirror, bite teeth together, and look at position of two center teeth on lower jaw. Open slowly while watching these two teeth and attempt to keep the lower jaw “centered” as you open. Repeat 10 times.
- 4) **Simple Opening/Stretch** - Open jaw slowly 10 times as wide as is comfortable.
- 5) **Lateral Movement Exercise** - Open jaw about one inch from clenched bite. Move lower jaw as far to the right (straight to the right without opening more) as is comfortable. Repeat 10 times and then do the same to the left side.
- 6) **Neck Stretch** - Attempt to bend ear to shoulder by bending the neck *not* raising shoulder. Repeat 10 times and then do 10 more to the opposite side.
- 7) **Overbite Exercise** - Bring the lower teeth in front of the upper teeth 10 times at each meal and at bedtime.
- 8) **Midline Exercise – Advanced** - It is important to open the jaw exactly in the midline so that the muscles become balanced. Draw a straight line on a mirror. Mark the midline of your nose, lips, chin. Seat yourself comfortably. Use the mirror as a biofeedback mechanism to see the jaw open in the midline. You don't open the jaw; instead you allow it to open so that it automatically opens midline. Also use the mirror to SEE the face relax. When you see the face relax you know you are doing this right. Breathe in at the count of 4 and out at the count of 6. As you exhale, let this be a signal to relax the jaw, the face, and the brow. For TMJ you need to do the mirror 10 minutes a day, twice a day for 10 days.

Following can be performed at home to reduce TMJ muscle spasms and pain. They include:

- Restricting the diet to soft, non-chewy foods,
- Applying moist heat to the face using a warm washcloth,
- Massaging sore, tense jaw muscles,
- Using a heating pad on sore areas for half an hour twice a day,
- Practicing relaxation exercises for stress reduction,
- If pain is severe, it is best to refer patient to dentist or jaw specialist for the creation of a customized bite splint worn at night to prevent teeth grinding.