

Oxfordshire Community Dental Service

# **Temporomandibular joint exercises**

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# What is temporomandibular disorder?

A condition which affects the jaw joint and chewing muscles in your face which can be painful and usually gets better on its own but may disturb sleep.

The temporomandibular joint is where the jawbone attaches to the temporal bones of your skull, it allows your jaw to move up and down, side to side so that you can chew, talk, yawn.

## Symptoms

These can vary but may include:

-  Headaches, earaches, pain behind the eyes, around the jaw or temple.
-  Buzzing sensation in the ear or ears feel 'blocked'.
-  Clicking or popping sound when you open/close your mouth or chew.
-  Difficulty opening your mouth fully or smoothly.
-  Tenderness in jaw muscles.
-  Jaws that get 'stuck' or 'lock out'.
-  Neck problems; stiffness or sore muscles.

## Possible causes

Exact causes may be unknown but possible causes may be:

Stress or anxiety

Frequent teeth grinding/clenching

Previous injury

Genetics

If you believe you may have TMD see your dentist or GP for an accurate diagnosis and treatment options.

## What can I do during a flare up?

- ✓ Eat a soft diet; for example an omelette, soup, or pasta.
- ✓ Use warm and cold compresses/packs.
- ✓ Stress management and relaxation techniques.
- ✓ Find ways to manage jaw grinding/teeth clenching i.e. bite plate.
- ✓ Take paracetamol or ibuprofen as appropriate, if you can.

# What can I do after a flare up?

- ✓ Identify activities/events that cause a flare up.
- ✓ Try to manage stress and build relaxation time into your routine.
- ✓ Jaw exercises.

# What exercises can I do to help?

## Tongue stretch

Close your mouth teeth touching not clenched.

Rest the tip of your tongue just behind your front teeth.

Run the tip of your tongue backwards, as far as it will go, teeth together.

Push your tongue back to make contact with your soft palate.

Slowly open your mouth until you feel your tongue being pulled away. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Relax.

Repeat slowly but firmly.

## Jaw stretch A

Stretch your jaw by opening your mouth very widely without causing any pain.

Use the same stretch to open your jaw to both sides: open your mouth widely while shifting your jaw to the right.

Then open your mouth widely while shifting your jaw to the left.

Use your hands to support the stretch if you wish.

## **Jaw stretch B**

Place your hands under your chin.

Partly open your mouth against the pressure of your hands.

Hold this position for 20 seconds.

Swallow and relax for a few seconds.

## **Jaw alignment**

Place your fingers lightly over the jaw joints on either side of the face.

Let your thumbs rest below the chin to support it.

Open the mouth smoothly as wide as you comfortably can.

Use your thumbs as guides to make sure you open your mouth without moving your jaw to one side.

With time and confidence, you may wish to increase the number of times you repeat these exercises.

Ask your dentist for further advice.

## Finding a dentist

To find a dentist visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or call 0300 311 22 33.

## Further information

For further information please see:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/temporomandibular-disorder-tmd/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/temporomandibular-disorder-tmd/)

Use this QR code to find all Oxfordshire Community Dental Service leaflets. You can also access them in an accessible format.



# Accessibility

An accessible version of this leaflet can be found on our website: [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/cds](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/cds)

If you need the information in another language or format, please contact us.

## Get in touch

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## Feedback

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice and support to patients, families, and carers, helping to resolve any problems, concerns, or complaints you may have.

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