

# Temporomandibular Disorders

## What are temporomandibular disorders?

Temporomandibular (TEM-puh-roh-man-DIB-yoo-ler) disorders (also called TMD) affect the jaw and the muscles you use to chew and open your mouth. It is sometimes incorrectly called TMJ, but this refers to only the jaw joint itself.

## What causes it?

TMD can be caused by an injury to the jaw, head, or neck. Grinding or clenching the teeth, arthritis in the jaw joint, jaw dislocation or fracture, an abnormal bite pattern, or other things that put stress on the jaw joint can cause TMD. Certain conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, can also cause it. Depression, anxiety, and chronic pain may be related to TMD.

## What are the symptoms?

TMD is more common in women and in people 20 to 40 years of age. The most common symptom is pain around the jaw joint, especially when opening or closing the mouth. It is usually felt on only one side. Other symptoms can include neck and shoulder pain, headache, limited jaw motion, and popping or clicking sounds when chewing or opening the mouth.

Talk to your doctor if you think you might have TMD. He or she will ask about your

medical and dental history, and will examine your jaw, head, and neck. X-rays are usually not needed.

## How is it treated?

Keeping your jaw relaxed and avoiding excessive jaw movement (such as chewing gum) are the first things to try. Your doctor might prescribe medicines to reduce swelling or relax your muscles. If these don't help, you might need to see an oral surgeon. He or she may give you shots for the pain or give you a mouth guard to keep you from grinding your teeth at night. Most people do not need surgery.

## Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/2007/1115/p1483.html>

MedicineNet

[http://www.medicinenet.com/temporomandibular\\_joint\\_syndrome\\_tmj/article.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/temporomandibular_joint_syndrome_tmj/article.htm)

National Library of Medicine

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/temporomandibularjointdysfunction.html>

TMJ Association

<http://www.TMJ.org>

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**This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.**

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