

TMJ (Temporomandibular Joint Disease)

What causes TMJ pain?

The pain associated with TMJ is caused by joint cartilage displacement which causes stretching of nerves and inflammation of the jaw joint. The pain is also from muscle spasms. There are three major muscles attached to it. They are the temporalis (temple), masseter (cheek), and digastric (neck) muscles.

Damage to the TMJ is often caused by:

- Major or minor trauma to the jaw
- Teeth grinding
- Excessive gum chewing
- Stress or other psychological factors
- Improper bite or malpositioned jaws
- Arthritis

What are the symptoms?

- Pain- can be localized to the joint area in front of the ear, deep in the ear, or radiate down the neck, cheek, or into the head
- Sore jaw muscles
- Jaw popping/clicking
- Locking of the jaw
- Difficulty in opening the jaw fully
- Frequent head/neck aches

How is TMJ pain treated?

- Conservative management: rest the muscles and joints by eating soft foods x 2 weeks with Ibuprofen to reduce inflammation in joint (600mg three times per day or as tolerated by your stomach)
- Do not chew gum
- Avoid clenching or tensing
- Relax muscles with moist heat (½ hour at least twice daily)
- Prescription muscle relaxer if spasm present
- Bite guard/splint (over-the-counter [Doctor's Night Guard] or personally made from your dentist/oral surgeon)
- Physical therapy can be very helpful- Rx needed

****You may need consultation with your dentist and oral surgeon to facilitate effective management of TMJ pain- they may evaluate further and recommend more aggressive treatment****