

TMJ Dysfunction – Pain and tenderness due to dysfunction of the temporo-mandibular joint or surrounding musculature.

Synonyms: TMJ Syndrome.

Symptoms include jaw or facial pain, locking and/or catching of the jaw. Additional symptoms may include earache, headache, neck pain, and clicking/popping of the jaw.

How is it diagnosed?

TMJ is diagnosed based off of patient history, symptom assessment, and physical exam. There are many disorders that are associated with this joint, including muscle problems, bite problems and true joint problems.

Joint problems can appear in the form of injuries from a trauma or from diseases (such as arthritis). Trauma can stretch the ligaments or allow the disc to slip out of place. In the case of traumatic injuries, an x-ray or CT may be recommended.

Bite abnormalities or "malocclusions" can interfere with the proper working of the TMJ.

Muscular problems can also interfere with the proper working of the TMJ. The most common causes of this are poor posture and/or teeth clenching.

How is it treated?

Modalities such as heat, ice, electrical stimulation, ultrasound, or cold laser may help provide pain relief. Therapeutic exercise may be issued to improve range of motion. Exercises to restore proper posture may also benefit patients with TMJ dysfunction.

Manual mobilization/manipulation, especially to the cervical and thoracic spine, may help reduce stiffness and restore range of motion.

Alternative treatments.

Other treatment options may be required in the form of orthodontics, bite plates, or surgery.

Prognosis is good. 75% of patients will have resolution of symptoms within three months. Otherwise, a referral to a dentist specializing in TMJ, or a surgical referral, may be necessary.

Duration of care: *Approximately* twice a week for two weeks (4), then once a week for 2 months (8); for a total of 12 visits over 3 months.