



TMJ PAIN & DYSFUNCTION

PATIENT HANDOUT

WHAT IS THE TMJ?

The Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) connects your lower jaw to your skull. It allows you to talk, chew, yawn, and swallow. Healthy TMJs move smoothly using: The jawbone (mandible), Temporal bone, A cushioning disc, Jaw muscles: masseter, temporalis, medial & lateral pterygoids.

COMMON SYMPTOMS

You may have a TMJ problem if you experience:

- Jaw pain or tightness
- Clicking, popping, or grinding noises
- Jaw locking or difficulty opening
- Ear pain, ringing, or fullness
- Headaches or dizziness
- Pain with chewing
- Neck and shoulder tension

COMMON CAUSES

- Jaw clenching or grinding (often from stress)
- Disc displacement
- Trauma (injury, dental procedures, whiplash)
- Forward head posture
- Arthritis
- Muscle overuse (gum chewing, nail biting)

HOW CHIROPRACTIC & ACUPUNCTURE HELP

CHIROPRACTIC:

- Gentle TMJ mobilizations
- Neck and upper back adjustments
- Muscle release of jaw, face, neck
- Intraoral pterygoid release
- Postural correction exercises

ACUPUNCTURE:

- Reduces muscle tension
- Improves circulation
- Helps with headaches and jaw pain
- Targets jaw, face, and neck points

Research supports combining acupuncture/dry needling with cervical (neck) chiropractic care for improved pain and mobility.



SELF-CARE & HOME STRATEGIES

DO:

- ✓ Choose soft foods during flare-ups
- ✓ Apply heat 10–15 minutes
- ✓ Practice tongue-to-roof-of-mouth relaxation
- ✓ Do chin tucks and gentle stretching
- ✓ Try resisted mouth-opening (5–10 reps)
- ✓ Manage stress (breathing, meditation)
- ✓ Sleep on your back with a supportive pillow

AVOID:

- ✗ Gum chewing
- ✗ Hard or chewy foods (raw carrots, apples, tough meats)
- ✗ Nail biting
- ✗ Clenching during workouts
- ✗ Stomach sleeping

DAILY ROUTINE CHECKLIST

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heat pack 10–15 minutes | <input type="checkbox"/> 2–3 minutes jaw/temples self-massage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 chin tucks | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid gum & clenching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 shoulder blade squeezes | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation practice (5 minutes) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5–10 resisted jaw openings | <input type="checkbox"/> Back-sleeping with supportive pillow |

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL CARE

If symptoms persist for more than 1 week or if you experience:

- Jaw locking
- Severe clicking/popping
- Difficulty eating
- Trauma to the jaw/face
- Worsening headaches or ear pain

Professional chiropractic and acupuncture treatment can restore joint mobility, reduce muscle tension, and help prevent future flare-ups.