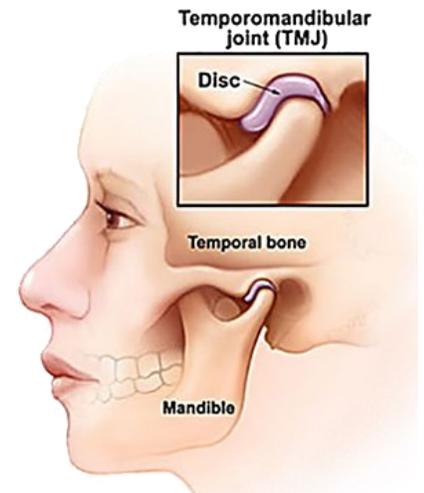




## Temporomandibular Joint Disorders (TMJ/TMD)

The temporomandibular joints (TMJ) are the joints and jaw muscles that make it possible to open and close your mouth. Located on each side of the head, your TMJ work together when you chew, speak or swallow and include muscles and ligaments as well as the jaw bone. They also control the lower jaw (mandible) as it moves forward, backward and side to side.

Each TMJ has a disc between the ball and socket. The disc cushions the load while enabling the jaw to open widely and rotate or glide. Any problem that prevents this complex system of muscles, ligaments, discs and bones from working properly may result in a painful Temporomandibular joint disorder (TMD).



### What causes TMD?

Identifying a definitive cause of TMD can be difficult. Pain may be due to a variety of factors, including:

- ◆ Genetics/Disease
- ◆ Arthritis
- ◆ Dislocation and/or injury
- ◆ Tooth and jaw misalignment
- ◆ Stress and teeth grinding

### What are the symptoms of TMD?

Signs and symptoms of TMD can include:

- ◆ Pain in one or both of the TMJ
- ◆ Aching facial pain
- ◆ Aching pain in and around the ear
- ◆ Difficult/painful chewing
- ◆ Swelling on the side of the face

- ◆ Jaw stiffness
- ◆ Locking of the joint, making it difficult to open or close your mouth
- ◆ A clicking sound or grating sensation when opening the mouth or chewing
- ◆ Additional symptoms can include: toothaches, headaches, neck aches, dizziness, hearing problems, upper shoulder pain, and ringing in the ears (tinnitus)

### How is TMD diagnosed?

TMDs are difficult to diagnose because the condition has many symptoms in common with ear infections, facial nerve pain, headaches, tooth and gum diseases, tumors, and neck pain.

To determine a diagnosis of TMD, the commonly accepted approach is a process of elimination — rule out all other potential pain generators with steps including:

- ◆ Detailed medical history (i.e. health conditions, recent injuries, medications)
- ◆ Careful examination of the jaw, face, neck, ears, mouth, and throat
- ◆ Imaging studies of the teeth and jaws
- ◆ Blood tests

### Are there treatment options for TMD?

Opinions vary on how to treat TMD disorders. The good news is that most people eventually find something that helps.

Simple, conservative therapies are usually recommended first, including:

- ◆ Learn stress-reducing techniques

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- ◆ Learn how to gently stretch, relax, or massage the muscles around the jaw
- ◆ Avoid actions that cause symptoms, such as yawning, singing, and chewing gum
- ◆ Apply moist heat or cold packs on your face
- ◆ Temporarily adopting a soft diet
- ◆ Exercising several times each week may help increase the ability to tolerate mild pain.

Short-term use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and other medications for pain and inflammation may be prescribed.

You may also be referred to an oral surgeon or dentist for a bite guard or other dental appliance, which have a long history of use for treating teeth grinding, clenching, and TMD disorders.

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