



*Doctor, Please Explain...*

# TMJ PAIN

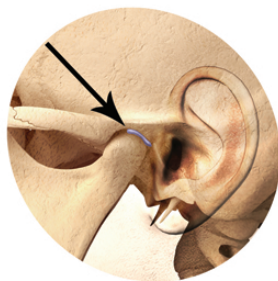
**Open your jaw** all the way and shut it. This simple movement would not be possible without the Temporo-Mandibular Joint (TMJ). It connects the temporal bone (the bone that forms the side of the skull) and the mandible (the lower jaw).

Even though it is only a small disc of cartilage, it separates the bones so that the mandible may slide easily whenever you talk, swallow, chew, kiss, etc. Therefore, damage to this complex, triangular structure in front of your ear can cause considerable discomfort.

## WHERE IS THE TMJ AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

### Where is the Temporo-Mandibular Joint?

You can locate this joint by putting your finger on the triangular structure in front of your ear. Then move your finger just slightly forward and press firmly while you open your jaw all the way and close it. You can also feel the joint motion in your ear canal.



### How does the Temporo-Mandibular Joint work?

When you bite down hard, you put force on the object between your teeth and on the Temporo-Mandibular Joint. In terms of physics, the jaw is the lever and the TMJ is the fulcrum. Actually, more force is applied (per square foot) to the joint surface than to whatever is between your teeth because the cartilage between the bones provides a smooth surface, over which the joint can freely slide with minimal friction.

Therefore, the forces of chewing can be distributed over a wider surface in the joint space and minimize the risk of injury. In addition, several muscles contribute to opening and closing the jaw and aid in the function of the TMJ.

## WHAT CAUSES TMJ PAIN AND DAMAGE TO THE JOINT?

## HOW IS TMJ PAIN TREATED?

### What causes TMJ pain?

In  
res  
pre  
ner  
snap  
chev  
and

tempo  
bone  
disc

### What causes TMJ pain?

- ✓ M
- ✓ T
- ✓ E
- ✓ S
- ✓ I
- ✓ A

*Doctor, Please Explain...*



# TMJ PAIN

Alan S. Berger, M.D.\*  
Todd C. Morehouse, D.O.\*\* | Lana B. Patitucci, D.O.  
Marta T. Becker, M.D. | Lindsay A. Goodstein, M.D.  
Donald M. Sesso, D.O.\*\* | Meghan L. Brooking, D.O.

Diplomates American Board of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery  
\* Fellow of the American College of Surgeons  
\*\* Fellow of the American Osteopathic College of Otolaryngology

EAR NOSE & THROAT - FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

### How is TMJ pain treated?

TMJ symptoms often develop in the head and neck, otolaryngologists are appropriately qualified to diagnose TMJ problems. Proper diagnosis of TMJ requires a detailed history and physical, including a thorough assessment of the teeth occlusion and function of the jaw joints and muscles. An early diagnosis will likely respond to simple, self-remedies:

- Rest the muscles and joints by eating soft foods
- Do not chew gum
- Avoid clenching or tensing
- Relax muscles with moist heat (2 hour at least twice daily)

In the event of a joint injury, apply ice packs soon after the injury to reduce swelling. Relaxation techniques and patient education, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, muscle relaxants or other medications may also offer relief.

For patients for advanced cases may include wearing an occlusal splint to prevent wear and tear on the joint, improving the alignment of the teeth, and surgery. After diagnosis, consult with an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat doctor) for further consultation with your dentist to facilitate effective management.