



ARE YOU A JAW CLENCHER?

What is Bruxism?

Bruxism is an oral habit involving involuntary grinding or clenching of one's teeth while they sleep. There are several things that can lead to bruxism including stress, anxiety, sleep disorders, and Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD).

What is Temporomandibular Disorder?

The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) connects the lower jaw to the skull (just in front of the ear). The TMJ is comprised of muscles, blood vessels, nerves, and bones. You have two TMJs, one on each side of your jaw. Muscles involved in chewing also open and close the mouth. The jawbone, which is controlled by the TMJ rotates/hinges (opening and closing of the mouth), and slides (allows the mouth to open wider). The coordination of this allows you to talk, chew, and yawn.

Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD) is the name given for a group of symptoms that cause pain in the head, face, and jaw. These symptoms can include:

- Headaches
- Pain in the sinuses, face, ears (tinnitus), eyes, teeth, and neck, shoulders, and back muscles
- Joint noises (clicking, cracking, crepitus)
- Difficulty opening/closing jaw
- Difficulty chewing and swallowing
- Bruxism: Grinding teeth (worn down or cracked teeth)

How can an Osteopath help?

Osteopaths usually first do a postural assessment, which will include them looking at your head, neck, and spine relations, as well as the position of the TMJ in relation to the skull, spine, and shoulders. Once assessed, treatment may consist of the practitioner doing gentle stretches and manipulations inside of the mouth to reach some of the deeper structures. Other treatment may include creating a temporary separating the two joint surfaces between the condyle of the mandible and the base of the skull. This allows the joint to reset itself comfortably. This can bring back some movement that may have been lost from the condition.

Questions? Contact Beech Street Health Centre! info@beechstreethealth.ca | (902) 406-7200

Jaw Exercises for TMJ Pain

If you are experiencing any symptoms of Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD) these nine exercises can help relieve temporomandibular joint (TMJ) pain and improve your jaw joint movements. For some exercises there are frequency recommendations. For exercises where frequency recommendations aren't available ask your therapist at Beech Street Health Centre for guidance.

1. Relaxed Jaw

Rest your tongue gently on the top of your mouth behind your upper front teeth. Allow your top and bottom teeth to come apart while relaxing your jaw muscles.

2. Goldfish (Partial Opening)

Place your tongue on the roof of your mouth and one finger in front of your ear where your TMJ is located. Put your middle or pointer finger on your chin. Drop your lower jaw halfway and then close. There should be mild resistance but not pain. A variation of this exercise is to place one finger on each TMJ as you drop your lower jaw halfway and closed again. Do this exercise six times in one set. You should do one set six times daily.

3. Goldfish (Full Opening)

Keeping your tongue on the roof of your mouth, place one finger on your TMJ and another finger on your chin. Completely drop your lower jaw and bring it backwards. For a variation of this exercise, place one finger on each TMJ as you completely drop your lower jaw and back. Do this exercise six times to complete one set. You should complete one set six times daily.

4. Chin Tucks

With your shoulders back and chest up, pull your chin straight back, creating a "double chin." Hold for three seconds and repeat 10 times.

5. Resisted Opening of Mouth

Place your thumb under your chin. Open your mouth slowly, pushing gently against your chin for resistance. Hold for three to six seconds, and then close your mouth slowly.

6. Restricted Closing of Mouth

Squeeze your chin with your index and thumb with one hand. Close your mouth as you gently place pressure on your chin. This will help strengthen the muscles that help you chew.

7. Tongue Up

With your tongue touching the roof of your mouth, slowly open and close your mouth.

8. Side to Side Jaw Movement

Put a 1/2 inch object, such as stacked tongue depressors, between your front teeth, and slowly move your jaw from side to side. As the exercise becomes easier, increase the thickness of the object between your teeth by stacking them one on top of each other.

9. Forward Jaw Movement

Put a 1/2 inch object between your front teeth. Move your bottom jaw forward so your bottom teeth are in front of your top teeth. As the exercise becomes easier, increase the thickness of the object between your teeth.

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