

TMJ Orthopedic Splint Instructions

Since the TMJ problems and treatment you are to receive are partially orthopedic in nature, we have fabricated an orthopedic jaw repositioning appliance for your benefit. The appliance will assist the jaw-joint, muscles and ligaments to relax and function more normally. Pressure will be reduced in the joint area and adverse habits such as clenching or grinding will be discouraged. **This appliance will also enable us to learn more about your problem and your true jaw position by allowing the muscles and joint to determine where your jaw opens and closes without the influence of the teeth.**

1. Full-time wear is most important. During the first few days, you can wear it for an hour or two with short intervals of rest until you become adjusted to it. Ideally, the appliance should be worn while eating. If this is too difficult to do, please wear at all times except eating.
2. First days in splint. Read out loud a few minutes daily to become comfortable with speech. You will notice increased saliva flow for a few days. Food tastes may be temporarily altered. You may feel slightly nervous or awkward at first. These feelings will go away. **Your teeth may be sore for several days.** If needed, you may take aspirin, Tylenol, ibuprofen or fish oil. If any areas of tissue irritation result, please call the office to have the splint adjusted.
3. Diet Modification. A softer diet is necessary and important, i.e., eggs, chicken, fish, ground beef, soups, nutritional cereals, salads (without hard vegetables such as raw carrots, celery, cauliflower, etc.), casseroles, juices, steamed vegetables, soft fruit, etc. **Avoid foods requiring wide opening and hard chewing** such as steak, raw vegetables, apples, hard-crust breads and bagels, chew candy such as **gum**, taffy, caramel, Tootsie Rolls, gummy bears, Starbursts.

Cut all foods into small bite-sized pieces and avoid opening your mouth wider than the thickness of your thumb.

4. Appliance Cleaning. Cleaning of your appliance is best accomplished by brushing it thoroughly with your toothbrush and toothpaste. Do this after every meal. Your appliance can occasionally be soaked in mouthwash or a denture cleaner such as Polident or Efferdent. *Do not use HOT water. This may warp your appliance, and affect the fit.*
5. **Do Not Allow Your Teeth to Touch** when your appliance is out of your mouth for cleaning. Keep in mind that we do not want your teeth to determine where your jaw opens and closes.

Your bite may change as your jaw position changes; therefore, future adjustments to your splint may be necessary and additional therapy such as orthodontics (braces), equilibration (grinding) of your teeth, a second type of splint or even surgery may be recommended.

TMJ Self Help Instructions

1. Please keep in mind that your oral appliance is not a cure in itself; rather, this appliance is a tool that will help us to learn more about your problem and will help you to manage your pain or discomfort.
2. During the day, please be aware of your jaw and jaw muscles. Do not: clench or grind your teeth, bite your lips or cheeks, slide your jaw from side to side or thrust it forward. **Make a conscience effort to relax your jaws.** Place Post-it notes with the letters **LTTAR (Lips Together Teeth Apart Relax)** in areas that you frequent often such as your office desk, car, home. Repeat this saying to yourself and try and make your jaw muscles relax.
3. Try moist heat, ice packs, alternating heat and ice, manual massage or gentle jaw stretching exercises (especially in the shower with hot water splashing on your jaw muscles). *All patients are different*; therefore, try and discover what makes **your** jaw and muscles feel better. Please notify the doctor of any findings.
4. Please take a multivitamin every day. All females should take a formula with excess **Calcium**.
5. Medications: Advil, Tylenol, Aspirin or fish oil can be used.
6. **Do not allow the stress in your life to build up.** Vent your stress or anger externally. Light aerobic exercise such as walking, bicycling, or jogging are excellent for relieving stress.
7. **Follow all recommendations of other professionals such as family physicians, chiropractors or physical therapists that you may be seeing for your condition. Please keep in mind that many TMJ problems are multifactorial and multiple treatment regimens may be necessary to help you.**
8. Avoid opening your mouth wide during yelling, talking, or **yawning**. Place a fist under your jaw to support it during yawning.
9. **Be sure to get adequate sleep.** The best sleeping position is flat on your back without hands or fists curled under the jaw. Try to sleep with your fingers stretched out and not in a fist. This will help you to relax. **Avoid sleeping on your jaw or face.**
10. **Avoid long periods in the same position, especially if the jaw and face are involved.** For example: holding the phone between your shoulder and ear, staring at a computer or TV screen for extended periods, looking or working above your head for long periods. Every twenty minutes you should stretch and relax.
11. **STOP SMOKING** and reduce alcohol intake.
12. Avoid heavy carrying, pushing, or lifting which would **strain** jaw, neck, or back muscles.
13. *Realize that jaw/muscle problems are psycho-physiological in nature, meaning related to stress plus injury or abnormality. Reducing tension and external stress in your life will be of great benefit.*

TMJ Diet Recommendations

Because dietary stress or allergy tendencies toward certain foods may be a significant factor contributing to your TMJ problems or your body's ability to heal itself, you are asked to make the following changes in your daily intake of foods during your treatment.

FOODS TO INCREASE: Please increase the amount of fresh fruits and fresh vegetables that you eat. Try to have at least one fresh vegetable and one fresh fruit each day. Although frozen products are generally acceptable, they should be consumed in addition to the fresh foods recommended. **Only eat fresh foods that are not hard or crunchy.**

Please increase your consumption of **green salads** to have at least one salad every three days, although you may eat salads as often as you wish in most circumstances. If possible, use a dressing with healthy fats and apple cider or red wine vinegar, or lemon juice rather than commercially prepared dressing which may contain a large amount of sweeteners and bad fats.

In addition, seafood, chicken, turkey or bean consumption should be increased for a source of protein. **Avoid hard to chew meats such as steaks and ribs.**

FOODS TO DECREASE: Please avoid all processed foods which contain refined sugars and artificial sweeteners. Avoid high fructose corn syrup and processed seed oils as well.

Please also decrease the following: processed foods (lunch meat, etc.), food high in bad fats, artificial sweeteners, **all forms of caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate and soda)**, white flour, milk and milk products (if allergies are suspected) and alcohol.

Try to avoid fast food restaurants since many of the menu choices are high in seed oils which are bad fats.

Essentially, we are asking you to be a label reader so that you may avoid getting junk foods in your diet. It is the processed, refined carbohydrates that are our concern, not complex carbohydrates such as potatoes or other vegetables. Be sure that your diet is well rounded and includes foods from all food groups. Consult your family physician or a registered dietician for more information.