



Jaw Exercises for TMJ

Strengthening Exercises (do between flare-ups)

- Place thumb under chin and push chin downward against it. Continue opening the mouth against the medium pressure from thumb and hold mouth open for 5-10 seconds.
- Open mouth as wide as you can without being uncomfortable. Put index finger between the chin and lower lip. Push inward while closing mouth against the resistance.

Stretching Exercises

- Place tip of tongue on the roof of the mouth. Open mouth as wide as it can be without being uncomfortable and hold for 5-10 seconds.
- Tongue Up- With tongue touching roof of mouth, slowly open and close mouth.
- Relaxed jaw exercise- Rest tongue gently on top of mouth behind upper front teeth. Allow teeth to come apart while relaxing jaw muscles.
- Place tip of tongue on roof of mouth. Glide lower jaw out as far as it will go and then back in as far as it can go. Hold for 5-10 seconds in each position.
- Slowly and steadily open mouth as wide as it can go (without being uncomfortable) with tongue in neutral position. Hold for 5-10 seconds then close mouth. Next, open mouth slightly and glide lower jaw back and forth 5-10 times.
- Close mouth. With head facing straight ahead, glance to the right with eyes only. Extend lower jaw to left and hold 5-10 seconds. Repeat on opposite side.
- Chin tucks- With shoulders back and chest-up, pull chin straight back creating a “double chin”. Hold for 3-6 seconds then close mouth slowly.
- Resisted opening of the mouth- Place thumb under chin. Open mouth slowly, pushing gently against chin for resistance. Hold for 3-6 seconds, then close mouth slowly.
- Resisted closing the mouth- Squeeze chin with your index and thumb with one hand. Close mouth while gently putting pressure on chin.
- Goldfish Exercise (partial opening)- Place tongue on roof of mouth and one finger in front of ear where TMJ is located. Put middle or pointer finger on chin. Drop 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 lower jaw drops halfway and closed again. Repeat exercise 6 times in one set. Do one set 6 times daily.

- Goldfish Exercise (full opening)- Keeping tongue on the roof of mouth, place one finger on TMJ and another finger on chin. Drop lower jaw completely and back.
 - For variation, place one finger on each TMJ as lower jaw is completely dropped and back. Do this exercise 6 times to complete one set. Do one set 6 times daily.
- Place thin object (paintbrush or pencil) in-between front teeth. Slide lower jaw forward so that the object rests in-between back teeth and front teeth. Hold for 20 seconds. When it becomes easier to do, use wider object.
- Side-to-Side Jaw Movement- Put ¼ inch object (stacked wooden craft stick) between front teeth and slowly move jaw from side to side. When exercise becomes easier, increase thickness of the object between teeth.
- Forward Jaw Movement- Put ¼ inch object (stacked wooden craft stick) between front teeth. Move bottom jaw forward so bottom teeth are in front of the top teeth. When exercise becomes easier, increase thickness of the object between teeth.

Relaxation Exercises

- Slowly inhale, allowing stomach instead of chest to expand. Exhale slowly, making it last as long as you inhale. Repeat 5-10 times.
- When sitting or laying in a comfortable position, tense and release tension from each muscle of the body starting with feet up to the head.

Managing TMJ pain

- Gently massage the painful area
- Over-the-counter pain relievers such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen
- Mouth guards to prevent teeth grinding and jaw clenching
- Mouth guard to help realign jaw
- Warm moist towel or heat pack wrapped in moist towel
- Ice pack wrapped in towel for NO MORE than 15 min/ hr and NOT directly on skin
- Stress-relief techniques to prevent jaw tension
- Lifestyle changes
 - Eating soft diet to relax TMJ
 - Avoid chewing gum
 - Avoid biting nails
 - Avoid biting lower lip
 - Have good posture
 - Minimize large jaw movements like singing or yawning
 - Sleep on side