

TREATMENT OF TMJ IS AN INVESTMENT IN YOUR FUTURE

If left untreated, temporomandibular joint problems can lead to chronic head and neck pain and, in some cases, facial deformities. Early symptoms may include headaches, fatigue and tightness of the facial and neck muscles, pain with chewing, limited or painful opening of the mouth, and clicking in the TMJ.

Clicking with opening and/or closing, even if not currently painful, is a warning sign that could indicate that your TMJ is not working correctly. Studies indicate that 20 percent of patients with clicking joints report pain within 18 months and 70 percent do so within 10 years.

It is our experience after working with TMJ patients for over 25 years that early intervention is the key to preventing long-term problems. Most patients have less pain and better function within 4 to 6 physical therapy sessions, generally scheduled at 2 times per week. At that point, frequency of appointments can usually be reduced, moving toward independent management.

Your decision to attend appointments and perform home exercises will help your investment pay dividends in reducing pain, improving function and protecting against further injury to the TMJ.

If your insurance does not cover the care of temporomandibular problems, we have a cash pay program designed to assist you in obtaining the care you need.

Mission

Jackson County Physical Therapy is committed to supporting you on your return to optimal health and well-being.

Jackson County Physical Therapy Locations

Ashland

370 E. Hersey St. Ste 1
(541) 482-6360

Eagle Point

158 W. Main St.
(541) 830-0914

Medford

36 Hawthorne St.
(541) 776-2333

Phoenix

242 Fern Valley Rd.
(541) 512-0757

Vision

Jackson County Physical Therapy aspires to improve the quality of life of our patients by creating an environment that promotes wellness. We are committed to providing an experienced, caring staff dedicated to learning, teaching and personal development. We strive for a safe and confidential setting with unparalleled individualized care.

TMJ

Temporomandibular Joint Problems



**JACKSON
COUNTY
PHYSICAL
THERAPY_{LLP}**

Heal Your Body. Strengthen Your Life.TM

WHAT IS PHYSICAL THERAPY?

Your doctor has prescribed physical therapy because you may be experiencing pain and/or poor function in your jaw, face, head or neck.

Your physical therapist at Jackson County Physical Therapy works in a team approach with you and your doctor to achieve maximum pain-free function of the muscles and joints of this region.

While your doctor is busy making sure that your bite is correct (how your teeth match and come together) and that your mandible is oriented correctly up against the temporal bone, the physical therapist will be busy working with you on the following aspects of your care.

1. Correct oral mechanics:

Amazing as it may seem, the average person opens his or her mouth 12,000 to 50,000 times a day. It is easy to see, then, how important it is to perform this activity correctly. A majority of people with TMJ problems do not correctly open the mouth which produces abnormal stress to the structures of the temporomandibular joint causing early wear and tear. This wear and tear often presents itself as a clicking noise in the joint when opening or closing.

Re-establishing a correct opening pattern (which includes first a rolling pattern and then a gliding pattern) of the temporomandibular joint will often do several things:

- Quickly decrease the clicking a popping which you may be experiencing in the joint;
- Protect the joint from further injury;
- Result in decreased inflammation and, best of all, less pain.

2. Establishing an unclenched position of the jaw at rest:

Your doctor may have asked if you clench your teeth together at night or during the day.

Normal jaw position means that the teeth are slightly apart at all times except when chewing or swallowing. It's hard work for the muscles which close your jaw to keep your teeth even slightly touched together all day and night. Constant clenching will tighten the muscles across your cheeks and up along your temples and can cause severe facial pain and headaches.

Your physical therapist will help you to learn how to establish an unclenched position of your jaw at rest, utilizing both relaxation and stabilization exercises.

3. Helping you obtain the best head and neck alignment:

The muscles that attach to your jaw extend out to the head and neck area. Poor head posturing (present in the majority of TMJ patients) increases the pull on these muscles which attach to the jaw and can cause jaw and neck pain as well as headaches.

Better head and neck posture not only reduces strain and pain in the muscles attached to the mandible, but decreases strain and pain in the other structures of the head and neck as well.

4. Teaching relaxation skills, if needed:

It is not uncommon to notice the stresses of life being carried around the muscles of the neck and face.

Your physical therapist can teach you relaxation exercises which will help in establishing normal tone in your facial and neck muscles.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR FIRST VISIT

Your physical therapist will evaluate:

- Your posture
- The mechanics of how your head, neck and jaw currently move
- The state of muscle tension in your head, neck and jaw

You will also be asked about your habits and lifestyles:

- Do you chew gum?
- Do you sit in class or meetings with your chin propped up on your palm?
- Do you sleep on your stomach?
- Do you grind your teeth at night?

Knowing how you use your head, neck and jaw during the day (and night) will help the therapist design a treatment program for your maximum benefit.

If, at the time of your first visit, you are in severe distress (acute facial muscle spasm, severe headache, jaw locked open or shut) the therapist will initiate treatment including the following options:

Neuroprobe – “electrical acupuncture” stimulates the production of your body's own pain relievers, often providing immediate reduction in facial pain.

Ultrasound – (a form of deep heat) or other uses of heat and ice for pain relief.

Exercises – designed to decrease clenching and muscle spasm, and increase pain-free movement.

Subsequent visits will include ongoing education and will address problems identified in your initial visit. Your therapist will work with you on establishing treatment goals which take into consideration your lifestyle and physical needs.