

Safe, Nonsurgical TMJ Treatment Program

What is TMJ?

The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) is the most frequently used joint in the body, opening and closing 1,500 to 2,000 times per day, as it is involved in talking, chewing, swallowing, yawning and snoring.

The TMJ connects the lower jaw, or mandible, to the cranium. A small disc lies between the mandible and temporal bone. The disk allows for smooth and easy movement between the two uneven surfaces. Surrounding each TMJ is a joint capsule and an intricate network of ligaments and muscles.

All the structures of the TMJ combine to help maintain a fine balance. A disruption in any of these structures can upset this balance, thus creating the symptoms of TMJ dysfunction.

Symptoms of TMJ Dysfunction

A person with a TMJ dysfunction can exhibit any one of the following symptoms:

- ◆ Pain, grinding, clicking or popping in the TMJ.
- ◆ Limited movement of the cervical or thoracic spine or TMJ.
- ◆ Pain and tightness in the neck, back or shoulder.
- ◆ Headaches, facial, scalp or tooth pain, earaches, or dizziness.
- ◆ Muscle pain when chewing and talking.

Other symptoms may include: ringing in the ears, blurred vision, difficulty swallowing or sore throat without infection.

What Treatment Do We Offer?

The first step is evaluation by a physical therapist who is specially trained to treat TMJ dysfunction. After evaluation, an individualized treatment program is designed, which may include any of the following:

- ◆ **Ultrasound:** A physical agent used to modulate pain, reduce soft tissue swelling and inflammation, and increase rate of healing and tissue extensibility.
- ◆ **Iontophoresis:** An electro-therapeutic agent used to help decrease pain and inflammation. Iontophoresis allows delivery of a drug to a tender area of tissue, providing an alternative to hypodermic injection of medication and the associated discomfort of needle insertion.
- ◆ **Myofascial release/soft tissue mobilization:** A manual technique providing forces to improve functional tissue healing and decrease muscle spasm and pain.
- ◆ **Joint mobilization:** A skilled passive movement provided to decrease pain and muscle spasms and increase range of motion of jaw and neck.
- ◆ **Hot or cold packs:** Physical agents used to reduce or eliminate tissue swelling, inflammation or restriction caused by muscle injury.

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♦ **Education in self-care management:**

Educates the client about the role of oral habits, poor lifestyle and/or coping styles that affect the development and exacerbation of their problem.

- ♦ **Therapeutic exercise:** The physical therapist targets problems with performance of a movement or task and specifically directs therapeutic exercise to alleviate impairment, functional limitations or disability.

Where is Treatment Available?

A comprehensive TMJ treatment program is provided at Riverview Family Clinic Nekoosa, 1015 Angelus Drive. Services are provided by Riverview physical therapy staff specially trained and certified to treat TMJ. You may call Riverview Rehabilitation Center at 715-424-8500 for more information. A physician's or dentist's referral is required to initiate treatment.

What are the Treatment Goals?

- ♦ To decrease the pain as much as possible;
- ♦ To enable the client to understand the problem; and
- ♦ To help the client adapt his/her lifestyle to prevent reoccurrence of pain and manage his/her own care.