

## **What is TMJ or Tempromandibular Joint?**

When you open and close your mouth, your muscles, ligaments, bones and discs work together. They allow you to speak, chew, and swallow.

### **Causes of TM disorders**

People who suffer from symptoms ranging from earaches, headaches, dull aching facial pain, or tenderness of the jaw joints or muscles, may all be suffering from a common problem. These problems can be related to each other and can all be caused by jaw muscles and/or the jaw (tempromandibular or TM) joint. Commonly referred to as TM disorders, these problems stem from muscles and joint not properly functioning.

Some clear-cut reasons for having TM disorders may be from trauma, arthritis or severe stress. Problems such as clicking, popping, or even getting your jaw stuck can occur from a disc slipping forward in the joint. Serious problems such as clenching or grinding may occur; many people only do this at the night while sleeping. In time your jaw muscles will begin to have problems, which can lead to many more problems with pain and improper function.

### **Signs and Symptoms of TM disorders**

Many common signs and symptoms of TM disorders are as follows:

- Pain in/around the ears, with possible spreading to the face
- Tenderness of the jaw muscles
- A popping or clicking noise when you open or close your mouth
- Your mouth will get locked, or stuck open.
- Pain in chewing, yawning, or opening extra wide
- Difficulty opening

### **Treatments**

Some easy treatments to help fix mild TMJ may include:

- Trying to eliminate spasm and pain by applying moist heat to the area
- Prescribing medication such as muscle relaxants, analgesics, or anti-inflammatory drugs
- Soft diet for several weeks. No gum or other chewy things that stress muscles
- Eliminating the harmful effects of clenching or grinding the teeth by wearing a bite plate or nightguard
- Teaching relaxation techniques to help control muscle tension in the jaw
- Your dentist may suggest training or counseling to help eliminate stress, tooth grinding or clenching

Finally, if all other treatments fail, then jaw surgery may be required.