



**HARVARD ORAL AND MAXILLOFACIAL SURGERY ASSOCIATES**  
**(617-726-2740)**

***PATIENT INSTRUCTION SHEET***  
***Temporomandibular Disorders***

**INTRODUCTION:** Most temporomandibular disorders (TMD) can be grouped into two categories: *joint* or *muscle* problems. Some patients have both joint and muscle problems. The treatment protocol outlined below is designed specifically to relieve symptoms due to spasms that affect the muscles moving the lower jaw. There are two equally important components of your treatment protocol: 1) physical therapy and 2) medical (drug) therapy.

**TREATMENT PROTOCOL**

**#1 - PHYSICAL THERAPY:** Jaw rest is important to relieving TMD symptoms. It is important to avoid opening the mouth widely. If you need to yawn, either put your fist underneath your chin to resist opening or put your tongue behind your upper teeth and hold it there.

You should maintain a soft diet, avoiding foods such as fresh apples, carrots, celery, and lettuce. Good foods to eat at this time are scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, yogurt, cottage cheese, pasta, oatmeal, grits, etc. It is not necessary to maintain a full liquid diet, however, you should avoid food that require chewing. When you are resting, it is helpful to apply heat (a hot water bottle or heating pad) over the involved muscles for approximately 10 to 15 minutes per application.

**#2 - MEDICAL THERAPY:** The second major component of managing muscle pain involves using medications such as anti-inflammatory medications and muscle relaxants.

**Anti-inflammatory medications** such as aspirin or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) are important components of treatment. Your doctor will discuss appropriate dosage and timing of the medication. If your doctor prescribes medications, *it is important to take the medicine(s) on a regular basis.*

**Muscle relaxants** such as Flexeril or Robaxin may also be prescribed. If a muscle relaxant is indicated, your doctor will discuss appropriate dosage and timing of the medication. If your doctor prescribes these medications, *it is important to take the medications on a regularly basis.* A common side effect of muscle relaxants is drowsiness. Most patients overcome the side-effects between 3-5 days after starting the medication. If you cannot tolerate the side effects, please call the office to discuss treatment or medication alternatives.

Many patients have symptoms due to **“nocturnal bruxism,”** or grinding the teeth while sleeping. Your doctor may either recommend using a night guard or prescribe a low-dose of amitriptyline.

The **night guard** is an acrylic appliance worn in your mouth while sleeping to decrease the amount of force generated from clenching your teeth.

**Amitriptyline** in a low dose interferes with the habit of grinding teeth as well as giving individuals a more restful sleep. Amitriptyline for TMD is prescribed in escalating doses in order to find the correct dosage for each patient. Your doctor will instruct you to take one tablet at night, one hour before bedtime, for five nights. If after five nights you do not notice having a more restful sleep, or your jaw still feels stiff and painful in the morning, your dosage will be increased to two pills, one hour before bedtime, for five more nights. At the end of ten days of treatment, if you still do not feel as if you are getting a better night’s sleep and/or if your muscles still hurt when you wake up, your dosage will be increased to four pills, one hour before bedtime. The doctor will require a follow up visit at the end of two weeks to assess your response to treatment and to adjust the dose of amitriptyline as necessary.

Temporomandibular disorders, such as jaw joint or muscle problems, do not develop overnight. Likewise, you should expect the treatment protocol to take at least 10-14 days to begin relieving your symptoms. Most patients who follow the treatment protocol outlined above notice an improvement in their symptoms within two weeks. If your symptoms persist without relief, your doctor will recommend additional tests or treatment protocols. **If you have any questions during your treatment, please call MGH Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at 617-726-2740.**

## TREATMENT PROTOCOL

### Physical Therapy

- Jaw rest
- Avoid wide opening
  
- Soft diet
- Heat
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Medical Therapy

#### Anti-inflammatory medicines

- Aspirin 650 mg 4 times/day with meal
- Ibuprofen 800 mg 3 times/day with meal
  
- Tylenol 1000 mg 4 times/day
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Muscle Relaxants

- Flexeril 10 mg 3 times/day
- Robaxin 500 mg  
1 pill 3 times/day and  
2 pills at bedtime
- Other \_\_\_\_\_