

TMD physical therapy at home protocol

- The key is a consistent, repeated protocol- that means doing these routines daily!
- Your patience is importance. Our body takes time to heal. It did not get injured overnight, and will not recover right away, like many other muscles and joints in our body.
- Avoid anything chewy, hard, or tough that requires heavy biting forces. This includes nuts, chewing gum, crunchy apples, French bread, candies, raw carrots, caramels, steak, bagels, etc...
- Cut food in small pieces, evenly divide the food on both sides of your mouth, chew on both sides
- Avoid excessive caffeine because it stimulates your muscles to contract and hold tension. Avoid caffeine, or caffeine like drugs found in coffee, tea, sodas and chocolate
- Avoid opening mouth really wide, such as biting into fruits, sandwiches, yawning, yelling or prolonged dental procedures
- Avoid pressing against your chin with your palm
- No sleeping on the side, try to sleep on the back
- Wearing an occlusal guard/ occlusal splint daily
- Avoid playing with the jaw or trying to reproduce clicking noise in the jaw joints, or trying to check on the jaws by repeatedly doing uncomfortable movements
- Your teeth should never touch except lightly when you swallow or eat. Closely monitor yourself for any clenching or grinding habit, especially during working. Put your tongue against the roof of your mouth behind your front teeth to separate the teeth and put a reminder symbol (family picture, smiley,etc...)besides your workspace. When you see the symbol, check if you are tensing your muscles or clenching down your teeth.
- Learn to keep your jaw muscles relaxed, teeth separately
- Posture appears to play an important role for TMD patients. Try to maintain good head, neck and shoulder posture. Put a small pillow to support your lower back when working. Ensure you maintain good posture when using a computer and avoid poor habits such as cradling the telephone against your shoulder. If needed, please consult a professional for helping you with better ergonomics.
- Set aside time once or twice a day to relax and drain the tension from your body. Patients benefits from simple relaxation technique such as sports, yoga, walking, meditation, stretching or taking a warm bath.
- Use aspercreme crème over the affected area 4 times a day as needed. Take anti-inflammatory and pain reducing medications, such as Aleve, ibuprofen, Tylenol and aspirin to reduce pain. Avoid the medication with caffeine inside, such as Anacin, Excedrin or Vanquish.
- Massages of painful muscles
 - (1) Apply circular rolling motions or pressure at both sides of the cheek with all your fingers

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- (2) Use the thumb and 4 fingers, place the thumb on the inner part of the opposite side of cheek, use 4 fingers to press against the thumb and create a heavy pulling pressure from the back to the front of the cheek
 - (3) Apply pressure application at the angle of the mandible at both sides
 - (4) Apply pressure application at the cheek bone at both sides
 - (5) Apply pressure application and circular motion at the outside of the eye
 - (6) Apply pressure application at the side of the head (temporal bone area) at both sides
 - (7) Use 10 fingers to rub against the scalp
 - (8) Use 4 fingers to pressure against the back of the neck, and go up and down along the neck
 - (9) Use hand pressure to rub the opposite side of the shoulder
- Heat/ Cold packing:
- (1) If there is severe pain, try to put cold on the area for at least 30 minutes 3 times day.
 - (2) Once acute pain subsides, heat/ cold alternating packing protocol should be applied. Start with cold for 10 minutes, then heat for 10 minutes. Repeat this for 3 -4 times for each session, and 3-4 sessions per day. If one temperature makes the muscles feel better, try to stay on it for slightly longer time.
 - (3) Once there is no pain in the area, for better healing, heat packing should be applied at least 30 minutes per session, 3-4 sessions a day.