

Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Disorders

What is the temporomandibular joint (TMJ)?

The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) connects the lower jaw, called the mandible, to the bone at the side of the head – the temporal bone. The TMJ is different from the body's other joints. The combination of hinge and sliding motions makes this joint among the most complicated in the body.

What are TMJ disorders?

Researchers generally agree that the conditions fall into three main categories:

1. **Myofascial Pain** – the most common TMJ disorder, involves discomfort or pain in the muscles that control jaw function.
2. **Internal derangement** – a displaced disc, dislocated jaw, and or injury to the condyle.
3. **Arthritis** – refers to a group of degenerative/inflammatory joint disorders that can affect the TMJ

What are the signs and symptoms of TMJ?

Pain, particularly in the chewing muscles and /or jaw joint, is the most common symptom. Other likely symptoms include:

- Radiating pain in the face, jaw, or neck,
- Jaw muscle stiffness,
- Limited movement or locking of the jaw,
- Painful clicking, popping or grating in the jaw joint when opening or closing the mouth,
- A change in the way the upper and lower teeth fit together.

How are TMJ disorders treated?

General Dentist, Oral Surgeons, Physicians and Rheumatologist provide care to people with TMJ disorders. Treatment can include:

- Self-Care Practices – eating soft foods, applying ice packs, avoiding extreme jaw movements, gentle jaw stretching,
- Pain Medications – over the counter medicines or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs,
- Stabilization Splints – plastic guard that fit on upper and/or lower teeth.
- Surgical Implants – replacement of jaw joints.

If you think you have a TMJ disorder speak with dental or medical provider.

