

# **Conditions We Treat**

## **TMJ Dysfunction**

### **What is Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Disorder?**

Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) disorder is a common and debilitating condition. According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), TMJ disorder is the second most commonly occurring musculoskeletal condition resulting in pain and disability (after chronic low back pain), affecting approximately 5 to 12% of the population. We offer a safe, conservative approach to treating TMJ symptoms by treating the muscles, releasing the trigger points, mobilizing restricted joints, and addressing the dysfunction of the cervical spine. Our patients experience significant improvement.

TMJ is the hinge joint that connects the lower jaw to the skull via the temporal bone. It is one of the most frequently used joints in the body and is comprised of bones, muscles, blood vessels, and nerves. This joint allows you to open and close your mouth making it possible to chew, swallow, talk, and yawn. The muscles surrounding the TMJ control the position and movement of the joint.

TMJ disorder has a wide variety of causes. Poor posture, whiplash, a blow to the head, and neck problems can all contribute to the dysfunction of the jaw. Grinding or clenching teeth as well as other dental related issues can cause muscle tightness and spasm.

### **What are the symptoms of TMJ?**

Common TMJ symptoms include toothaches, headaches, neck aches, dizziness, earaches, hearing problems, upper shoulder pain, and ringing in the ears (tinnitus). Some patients may experience clicking, popping, or grating sounds in the jaw when opening or closing the mouth. The jaw can get “stuck” or “lock” in the open or closed-mouth position.

Our physical therapists are highly skilled and experienced in the treatment of craniofacial pain. We perform a comprehensive evaluation and includes the upper back, neck, head, and temporomandibular joint in order to determine the cause of the symptoms. Our goal is to restore normal function of the TMJ, eliminate pain, and help you return to normal functioning.

We are skilled in craniosacral therapy and specialize in soft tissue, muscle energy, and joint mobilization techniques and Bowenwork to decrease pain and restore normal functioning. Part of the treatment plan includes muscle re-education and strengthening, postural awareness, and self-care techniques.

### **What can I expect from a TMJ session?**

You can expect a thorough evaluation of the neck, upper back, shoulders, TMJ and mastication muscles. In addition, we also evaluate the spine and pelvis, posture, and body mechanics to determine if there are any habitual patterns that contribute to the dysfunction. We treat the joint as well as the muscular system. Part of the treatment might include inter-oral treatment, but we always keep the patients’ comfort in mind and the patient is an active participant in the treatment process—we listen to your concerns at all times.

## How do I know if I have a TMJ problem?

You might have a clicking in the jaw or pain in your mastication muscles. You might also have ear pain or headaches and aren't sure of the cause. You might have been to many doctors who could not determine the cause of your headaches. **If this is the case, you should consider a full assessment of your TMJ.** Many times people feel that TMJ problems cannot be solved, but TMJ can be treated and resolved. Visit us at Healing Hands Physical Therapy 58 Parkland Plaza, Suite 100, Ann Arbor, MI 48103.