

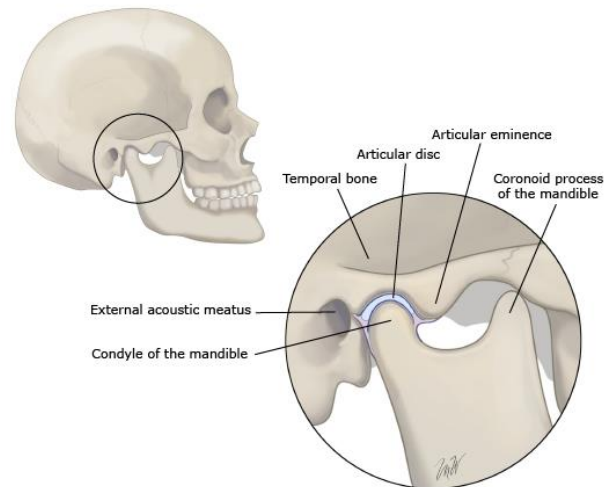
## Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (“TMJ”) Patient Instructions

### What is temporomandibular joint disorder (“TMJ”)?

- Temporomandibular joint disorder, often referred to as “TMJ,” refers to symptoms that arise from dysfunction of the temporomandibular joint. The temporomandibular joint is a hinge joint between your jaw and the deep portion of the ear canal that allows your jaw to open and close
- The most common TMJ symptoms include pain (which often feels like an earache), clicking/grinding with jaw opening, pain with chewing, jaw soreness, temporal headaches, a sensation of ear fullness, or ringing in the ear (tinnitus)

### What causes TMJ?

- Dysfunction of the temporomandibular joint is complex
- While mechanical factors like clenching the jaw (especially at night), grinding the teeth at night (bruxism), arthritis of the joint, malocclusion of teeth or trauma to the area can cause symptoms, the underlying cause is not only mechanical
- Psychosocial issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, PTSD, substance abuse, and chronic pain syndrome are also highly correlated with symptom severity
- Poor posture of the neck can also contribute to symptoms
- Symptoms can be worse in the morning, around mealtimes, but may also persist throughout the day or occur sporadically



### TMJ Management

- There are various levels of TMJ management, ranging from least to most aggressive
  - o Initial therapy usually consists of sticking with a soft diet, icing the area overlying the affect joint (in front of the ear) and taking over-the-counter medication like ibuprofen/Advil/Aleve/Motrin/Naproxen. These medications, called NSAIDs, are preferred because they have an anti-inflammatory effect, but some people cannot take NSAIDs due to issues with stomach ulcers, kidney dysfunction or being on blood thinners

- You can either take NSAIDs as needed for discomfort, or take a two week course of ibuprofen 400mg twice daily for 2 weeks. This may help reduce any chronic inflammation
- If you cannot take NSAIDs orally, OTC Tylenol or topical NSAIDs like Voltaren (diclofenac) topical can be used for acute symptom management
- If this is not working for you, then a discussion with your dentist regarding a night guard is warranted. Night guards help to soften the pressure that clenching the jaw/grinding the teeth at night place on your jaw joint
- If you are still having symptoms after use of a night guard, soft diet, ice and medical therapy, then consultation with a physical therapist and/or orofacial pain specialist is warranted. Further treatments that can be considered include physical therapy for the jaw joint and the muscles that act on it, muscle relaxants, anti-depressants, Botox injections into the muscles around the jaw joint, or injections into the jaw joint itself
- We can provide recommendations on such providers during your consultation