

Exercises to improve the function of the temporo-mandibular joint

The purpose of the exercise is to prevent clicking of the Jaw and to strengthen the muscles that pull your jaw backwards. It will relax the muscles that pull your jaw forwards or to one side as you open your mouth, which will take the strain off your joints.

Set aside two five-minute periods every day at a time when you can relax ie: before you go to bed or when you get home from work.

- i. Sit upright in a chair and close your mouth on your back teeth, resting the tip of your tongue on your palate just behind your upper front teeth.
- ii. Run the tip of your tongue backwards on to the soft palate as far back as it will go keeping your teeth in contact.
- iii. Force the tongue back to maintain contact with your soft palate and slowly open your mouth until you feel your tongue just being pulled away from the soft palate.
- iv. Do not try to open your mouth any further, keep it in this position for five seconds and then close your mouth.
- v. Relax for five seconds and then repeat i – iv slowly over the next 5 minutes in a firm but relaxed way.

As you open your mouth you should feel tension in the muscles at the back of your jaw and beneath your chin.

For the first few times that you do the exercise you should check in front of a mirror that the lower teeth move vertically downwards and that there is no movement from side to side as you open your mouth.

If the exercise is being carried out correctly there should be no clicks or noise from the joints. If there is you are probably not doing it properly and should carefully repeat steps i - iv.

Do this exercise no more than the recommended amount for the first week. Initially, it may seem to be making your pain worse, but this will be due to the unaccustomed exercise.

Thereafter, do the exercise as often as you can and it will help to strengthen the muscles around your joints.

If this exercise is carried out correctly and regularly over a two to three week period you will retrain your muscles so that your jaw opens and closes smoothly without clicks or jerks and any pain that you are experiencing will subside.

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Temporo-Mandibular Joint Exercises

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