TMJ No More™
Proven Holistic System For Curing TMJ Pain, Bruxism & Whiplash

A Unique Easy To Follow 3-Step Plan To Curing TMJ Pain & Other Related Disorders Using Proven Daily Exercises and Tested Holistic Techniques

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TMJ No More™

A Unique Easy To Follow 3-Step Plan For Curing TMJ and Other Related Disorders Using Proven Daily Exercises and Tested Holistic Strategies

By Sandra Carter
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Introduction: What This Book Is All About

My journey with TMJ began innocently enough: with a few headaches. But, before I tell you about my life with this disorder, let me explain why I call it a journey. Living with TMJ isn't like living with other diseases. I know that it won't kill me, but it sure has played havoc with my life – and my happiness.

Living in chronic pain is never easy. It can be even more difficult when doctor after doctor either doesn't take your symptoms seriously (after all, it's just a few headaches or a little jaw pain – yea, right!), or they offer treatment options that simply don't work.

The simple fact is, when you have TMJ, you suffer with chronic pain. Sure, it may seem innocent enough at first (as in my case), but before
long you can’t eat ... you can’t sleep ... and the pain and discomfort begins to eat away all of the joy from your life. You retreat into your own little world of constant discomfort as the people and things in your life take a backseat to finding something – anything – to relieve your suffering.

If you’ve ever had an abscessed tooth you know the kind of pain I’m talking about. Think about what it would be like if that pain never completely went away – now you know what a TMJ patient feels like.

Maybe you know what I’m talking about firsthand. Or maybe you’re trying to understand (and help) someone you care about through their own TMJ journey. Well, this book is here to help! But, back to my journey....

**My Story ...**

I was living life large. My career was headed toward the fast track; my love life was in full swing; and I had just purchased my first house. Life was hectic, and I loved it! Then I started to experience headaches a few
times a week. More annoying than debilitating, that soon changed as those simple “stress headaches” turned much, much worse.

Before I knew it I was experiencing eye pain in addition to a constant throbbing in my head; pressure behind my eyes and even some blurring. Scared I headed to my doctor’s office. After a few tests he confirmed that I suffered from cluster headaches, verging on migraines. Relieved it wasn’t anything more serious, I began treating my symptoms.

Then came a new set of symptoms: problems swallowing; clogged and stuffy ears; a sore neck and a backache, pain in my cheek muscles and shoulders, clenching, migraines and severe teeth grinding at night (which were so strong I broke several teeth during the years). A few more trips to the doctor and a few more tests, but still no diagnosis. I was sick and getting sicker.

It wasn’t until a routine visit to my dentist where I told him about my recent medical problems, in addition to an annoying clicking and soreness in my jaw, that he suggested that I be tested for TMJ Syndrome.
Since nothing else had panned out I agreed, and within a week was sitting in a specialist’s office with a firm TMJ diagnosis in hand.

Thankful to finally know what was causing my symptoms – and my increasing pain – I felt sure that relief would soon be on its way. It wasn’t.

After a couple of months, I went to see a doctor (who was also a chiropractor), and described the unbearable situation I was in, he had recommended several prescription medications and muscle relaxers.

Needless to say. It didn’t help at all.

I traveled from doctor’s office to doctor’s office looking for some relief – any relief! The pain was growing worse – and so did the night bruxism – and I needed help!

My life was no longer my own. I was short tempered with my family, my health was suffering (I sleep normally); and I was growing more and more depressed. I was reaching my breaking point and I knew it.
Something had to be done and it had to be done quickly or I was going to lose my mind. It was time to take action!

I took a few weeks off of work. I switched several doctors and complained about the stabbing pain in my ears and behind the eyes, the constant migraines, the locked jaw in the morning, the teeth grinding and other symptoms I was experiencing.

My new specialist I visited suggested surgery. Unbelievable I thought, only to later find out that in the vast majority of cases, surgeries are completely unnecessary and can often lead to irreversible results.

I wasn't convinced that was the most prudent option, so I began doing my own research into the disorder and discovered a lot of different (and less invasive) ways to treat my TMJ. I’d like to say that I found the perfect cure right away and was symptom free. In truth it took over 12 years to figure out what treatment methods would work best in my situation. Of course I didn’t have the benefits of having someone explain all of my options to me like you do. I had to figure it all out on my own.
Deep down, I felt there must have been another option, a healthier alternative.

I stopped taking the prescription medications and muscle relaxers. I was determined to find a natural solution to my problem despite of what my doctors had recommended.

I became obsessed with the subjects of holistic health and nutrition. I wanted to know everything there was to know about how to cure TMJ and prevent it permanently - I've been absolutely consumed by this quest. So I started studying - and hard! I bought every book on facial and jaw pain, teeth grinding, nerve damage, sinus issues, mouth and muscle therapies, oriental medicine, detoxing, dieting, and nutrition that I could get my hands on.

I spent hours at the library swallowing stacks of books, journals and magazines about TMJ, bruxism, and nutrition and reading every word. I have literally read hundreds of medicine books from cover to cover. My
library quickly grew to over 327 health and nutrition books and I had read every word almost to the point of memorizing them.

But I didn't just read. I interviewed countless of other TMJ sufferers and endlessly picked the brains of every doctor, chiropractor, herbalist, homeopath and naturopath...kind enough to lend me minutes of their time and fragments of their expertise and knowledge only to find a solid solution to my TMJ.

Book knowledge and interviews are one thing, but it's not the same as knowledge from actual experience. Scientific facts, figures and theories weren't enough.

I tried other types of prescription drugs and took muscle relaxers, vitamins and oriental medicinal herbs on a daily basis with high hopes for a change. I bought numerous "relaxation" CDs and have done plenty of exercise therapies, but to no avail.
I have also tried every TMJ treatment known to science and natural health with conviction, desire and hope that it will make a difference and that it will finally eliminate my TMJ and bring me my life back.

Over the years I have spent a small fortune trying every type of product and treatment you can think of. I have tried different mouth guards and splints, herbal remedies, detox diets, vitamin therapy, aromatherapy, reflexology, Chinese medicine, vegetarianism, magnetic therapy and whatnot.

While I did find some minor relief, it was always temporary and the painful TMJ symptoms and teeth grinding came back with a vengeance and sometimes got to be even worse than before the treatments. I just could not sleep. I was stressed, angry and depressed all the time. The extreme sleep deprivation along with the immense stress I was experiencing took their toll and I became very depressed.

Years went by slowly and painfully as my TMJ condition became worse than ever. I visited my doctor and he apologized in a very formal and polite manner and said he was sorry but there was nothing he could do.
Out of sheer desperation I bought additional alternative medicine books on TMJ and was amazed to find out that most if not all offered partial dietary advice along with exercises and special herbal supplements. These approaches don't work either! I know because I tried them all and I still suffered from severe TMJ.

Not the kind of person who readily gives up, I decided enough was enough. If the dozen or so doctors that I had seen couldn’t offer any help, I would find it on my own. Maybe it was frustration, or maybe it was a sense of self preservation that drove me forward on my quest to treat my own TMJ, but I was determined to find a cure for myself and others like me - and guess what -- I did!

Sure, it took months of reading, studying and experimenting, but I finally found the right combination of treatments that have since eliminated my TMJ and reclaimed my life and you can too!
After more than 12 years of diligent work and in-depth research on a daily basis, after experiencing several eureka moments and after a long process of trial and error and dozens of interviews and self experiments, I applied my years of training to finally uncover the solution to TMJ. From all the truths and evidence, misconceptions and lies...the TMJ puzzle was finally solved. It took me more than a year to polish and refine my discovery and in the end I applied it myself with great hopes and passion and to my sheer amazement - after a few weeks of following it, my TMJ and teeth grinding completely DISAPPEARED!

It took me a few years with a lot of research to get to where I am today, to know exactly what works and what doesn't. Yes, after desperate trial and error, countless of useless treatments, disappointments and agony, a simple holistic system opened the door to my new and much brighter TMJ free life. I was also excited to see that my TMJ and other related symptoms (such as the minor hearing loss I had) had completely diminished. After years of suffering I was finally free from TMJ!
That’s why I’ve written this book. To help every TMJ patient out there shorten their journey toward recovery by giving them the information they need to find the right treatment - without delay!

**How This Book Is Organized**

This book begins by offering a brief introduction into TMJ to help you better understand what it is and what causes it. Some of the things covered in Part One include:

- an explanation of the Temporomandibular Joints
- an overview of the fascia and myofascial pain
- the causes of TMJ
- the most common symptoms of the disorder
- the diagnostic procedures for TMJ

Part Two offers some real help by offering a three-step holistic approach to curing TMJ by:

- outlining how to improve jaw functioning with a variety of head, neck, mouth, tongue and chin exercises
• the importance of proper diet
• an overview of specific mineral/vitamin supplementation designed to help ease TMJ symptoms (and pain!).
• explaining how to identify and treat harmful habits and stressors that could be triggering your TMJ

In Part Three you’ll learn how other related disorders could be linked to your TMJ including whiplash, splints and fibromyalgia.

Part Four will discuss a variety of therapies to consider.
Of course, no comprehensive guide would be complete without a detailed glossary of all of those hard-to-read and understand medical terms, not to mention a list of solid resources and recommended website links.

Now, I’m no doctor, and I don’t pretend to be, but I do know a few things about TMJ and the havoc it can play in your life. I’ve suffered with the same pain and discomfort as you have, and I’ve managed to find a way
out of the hell TMJ can put its sufferers through. My goal with this book is to help others like me find relief. The path isn’t the same for everyone. We’re all different and so is our TMJ, but I do know this: the more we learn about TMJ and the options available for its treatment, the better chance we all have of breaking free from TMJ pain once and for all.

Ready to learn more? Great! Let’s get started ...
Chapter One: Understanding TMJ

Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (better known as TMJ) affects an outstanding 60 million people in the U.S. alone! That’s nearly 20% of the entire population. With more and more people being diagnosed every year, it’s important for those who suffer with TMJ (or think they do), to learn as much as they can about Temporomandibular Joints and how they work in order to better understand what’s causing their pain - and how to get rid of it.

Amy’s Story...

Understanding TMJ isn’t always easy, especially if, like Amy, you didn’t know anyone who had it before you began to experience your own problems with the disorder.

Amy’s story is like so many others I hear. She was active and healthy. Work was going well. Her love life was fantastic - as a matter of fact she
was planning a spectacular wedding! Sure, she was stressed and began to have headaches a lot, but hey, doesn’t everyone?

Then she was in a rear-end collision on her way home from work one rainy evening. She wasn’t hurt (or so she thought), so she never saw a doctor.

A few weeks later, Amy started noticing that her jaw was a bit sore in the mornings when she first woke up and before long she kept experiencing this annoying clicking and her teeth weren’t aligning correctly. Fearing that all of the orthodontic work she had done as a teenager was reversing itself, she made an appointment with her dentist. It didn’t take him long to suspect TMJ.

Feeling unqualified to treat Amy’s condition he referred her to a specialist who had scary news: surgery was needed to correct the problem or else she risked losing complete function of her jaw. Scared and confused, Amy decided to do a little research before agreeing to such a drastic treatment plan. Thank goodness she did!
It wasn’t long before Amy and I found each other through some work I was doing in the TMJ community and we discussed some promising new advancements in the natural healing of TMJ. Like I had before her, Amy decided to wait on the surgery a little while and try another approach first. To start she headed back to her dentist who fitted her with a splint for her lower teeth to help her break her nasty nighttime grinding and clenching habit. Next, she began a series of targeted exercises to help strengthen the muscles in her jaw and realign it. Finally, Amy began looking into ways to ease her stress and give her body the nutrients it needed to stay in tip-top working order. Today, Amy is a pain free TMJ survivor - without the need for invasive surgery.

Sure, sometimes she trips up and needs a refresher course in stress control and proper jaw maintenance, but generally speaking she remains symptom free.

What was Amy’s secret? Well, we’re going to share them with you now. In the following pages you’ll learn all of the things Amy learned about how to treat - and cure - her TMJ so you can to. But first, let’s learn a bit more about the Temporomandibular Joints and how they work...
What Are The Temporomandibular Joints?

Hold your fingers on the side of your face in front of your ears. Now, open and close your mouth. You should be able to feel a boney hinge on each side. This is called the Temporomandibular Joint and it helps your jaw go up and down with ease.

More than a simple “hinge” the TM Joint is made up of more muscle groups than any other joint in the body. But that’s not all. It also uses bone, ligaments, cartilage and fascia, to connect the lower jaw (called the mandible) to the skull. Without the complex makeup and interaction of this joint, you would be unable to open and close your mouth; speak, chew or even swallow properly - if at all!

As you can well imagine, even the simplest disruption of the TM Joint or any of its connective tissues, blood vessels, muscles, cartilage or more
can have an adverse effect on it, causing anything from mild to severe pain.

Making your jaw move correctly is an intricate process. Every time your jaw opens (even a little bit), the condyles (those rounded ends found at the top of each mandible), glide forward, slowly returning to their original spot when it recloses. In order for this to be a smooth movement, a soft disc lies between the condyle and the upper jaw to act as a type of shock absorber for the mouth and jaw.

With so many different muscles making the TM Joint work, its no wonder problems can occur so easily. Like any muscle in the body, if it is held in the wrong position for too long, it can cause tension induced spasms of the joint and surrounding muscle tissues.

While this wouldn't be a problem in other parts of the body, which can easily be rested, there is no way to stop using your jaw, which leaves the joint unable to heal.
What Is TMJ?

Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (TMJ) is categorized three ways:

- By Myofascial Pain. The most common of TMJ pain associated with discomfort in the jaw muscles, neck and sometimes even shoulders.
- By Internal Injury. Any type of derangement of the joint (dislocation or injury) can cause damage to the jaw, disc or condyle.
- By Degenerative Joint Disease. Osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis of the jaw can also cause TMJ.

Whenever the Temporomandibular Joint is injured, or comprised in any way, it causes a chain reaction to the surrounding tissues, which can cause pain. Most people find their TMJ caused by more than one problem. For instance, they may suffer with Myofascial Pain (the most common type of TMJ discomfort), caused by trauma or injury to
the jaw. Sometimes another, totally seemingly unrelated medical condition can be the cause, as we'll discuss later. But first let's talk about the pain most TMJ sufferers’ experience - myofascial pain.

**What is Fascia?**

Fascia is a connective tissue that joins every part of your body together with every other part. Woven in an intricate web, crisscrossing your entire body, fascia surrounds every organ, tissue and muscle in your entire body, including your brain. It helps to stabilize your body; helps you move and absorb the shock given to your tissues and organs from normal everyday activities.

When a part of your fascia malfunctions, is injured or inflames, it can cause widespread problems. Injure the fascia in your back and yes, your head can hurt. Likewise, experience inflammation of the fascia in your leg, and believe it or not your jaw and mouth can hurt. This can be very important when diagnosing any disorder - including TMJ
- since the ultimate cause of your jaw pain may have little to do with your mouth or head.

**What Is Myofascial Pain?**

Fascia around the muscle is called myofascial. When the fascia continually wraps itself around muscle fibers it eventually becomes a tendon, which ultimately becomes part of the bone.

When the fascia system is disrupted or injured, it begins to affect the muscles and cause some serious pain. This is called myofascial pain. Since myofascial pain can occur anywhere in the body, thus causing TMJ discomfort, no body part should be overlooked when trying to discover the source of your TMJ symptoms.
What Causes TMJ

No one knows for certain what causes TMJ Disorders, but one thing is certain: there are some standard contributing factors that have been linked to TMJ and the pain it causes. These conditions and behaviors have been separated into the following groups by TMJ advocates and researchers:

Dental Issues

The most common dental cause of TMJ is called Malocclusion, which simply means that your teeth no longer fit together in the way in which they were designed and therefore simply can’t close down the way they should. This poor bite can be due to a lot of things including:

- *ill-fitting dentures*
- *previous dental surgery*
Trauma

According to the American Dental Association, anywhere between 40 and 99% of all TMJ sufferers can link the onset of their TMJ symptoms to some sort of trauma or injury. Anything from a blow to the jaw or mouth to whiplash can cause TMJ symptoms. It is especially prevalent in people who have been in car accidents where the airbags have deployed. Some of the most common injuries linked to TMJ include:

- whiplash and traction appliances used in whiplash injuries
- even minor blows to the head, face or jaw
• and in some cases, ill fitting braces

Habits

There are a lot of habits that can cause damage to the TM Joint and surrounding tissues. Bruxism is the most common, including a constant clenching or biting of the teeth. Since clenching the teeth (and jaw) can put undue pressure on the TMJ area, ligament and cartilage damage can occur. Damaged cartilage can then lead to an actual dislocation of the joint’s disc which can create a locked or popping jaw. While bruxism usually happens when we’re sleeping, most dentists can tell if you are grinding or clenching your teeth at night with a simple exam. If you often notice sore muscles in your face and mouth upon awakening, consider this an option.

Other habits that may be causing your TMJ include:

• bad posture caused by slouching; habitually holding the phone on your shoulder; or sleeping on your stomach

• chronic gum chewing

• pencil chewing
• fingernail biting
• a poor diet
• any activities that put strain on the neck or back including weight lifting

Social Situations

Stress can be a leading cause of TMJ in some people. Since it may make you tighten the muscles around the neck and shoulder, it can affect the TM Joint by putting abnormal pressure on it. If left untreated long enough, those muscles can eventually shorten, creating a misalignment in the area. This can be a real pain inducer.

Some of the adverse social situations that can create the type of stress we’re talking about includes:

• a bad home life
• problems at work
• financial worries
• health concerns
• legal woes
• any type of serious life change (divorce, death, marriage, a new baby)

**Emotions**

It has been reported that any type of serious physical or mental upheaval can have lasting effects on your whole body - including your Temporomandibular Joint. This can include:

• depression

• severe anxiety

• fear

• anger

• frustration

• unrelieved stress
The Most Common Symptoms of TMJ Disorder

One of the most common misconceptions about TMJ is that it is jaw pain. That’s not a cause - it’s a symptom. Of course, it’s not the only symptom. If you suffer from TMJ, the odds are you feel a lot of discomfort in a lot of parts of your body including the head, face, eyes, mouth, ears, throat, neck and even the back. While we’ll discuss each of these areas in a minute (and the symptoms you may be experiencing in and around them), let’s first take a look at one of the most well-known TMJ symptom: clicking.

Clicking

Most TMJ patients notice a clicking or grating sounds when they open or close their mouth. The sound may or may not be accompanied with pain. So what’s causing all the noise? When the condyle is moved behind the disc (which it shouldn’t), it forces it to push forward, which in turn causes the condyle to override the
thickness of the disc, which causes that clicking sound as the jaw is opened. If a clicking is heard when the mouth is closing, it means that the condyle is slipping back behind the disc once again.

**Symptoms Around the Jaw**

TMJ can feature a lot of different symptoms, especially around the jaw and facial areas. Here are just a few that you may experience:

**Mouth and Face Problems:**

- a clicking, grating or popping of the jaw
- pain in the muscles of the cheeks
- teeth clenching during sleep
- jaw pain
- uncontrollable tongue movements
- an inability to open the mouth (a type of locking)
- jaw joint pain/problems
- pain in the teeth
- intense salivation
- voice fluctuations
• frequent coughing or constant clearing of the throat
• a tired or sore jaw upon awakening in the morning
• a twitching or uncontrolled movement of the jaw
• a jaw that unconsciously moves to one side
• sensitive teeth

**Head Problems**

• migraine headaches
• forehead pain
• sinus trouble
• hair or scalp sensitivity and/or pain
• difficulty swallowing
• throat tightening
• chronic sore throat (void of infection)
• pain in the tongue
• laryngitis
• muscle spasms around the head and neck
• ringing in the ears
• hearing difficulties
• clogged or stuffy ears
• balance problems (vertigo, dizziness, and disequilibrium)
• sinus pain
• eye tearing
• head/sinus pressure
• bloodshot eyes
• blurred vision
• light sensitivity

Problems Throughout the Body

The face and head isn’t the only place you can feel TMJ pain. Here are some other places that the pain can radiate to:

• neck pain
• tired or sore neck
• shoulder aches and soreness
• stiff neck
• upper or lower back pain
• tingling or numbness in your arm or finger
• overall body stiffness (but especially in the back, neck and shoulders)
• dizziness
• chronic coldness in the hands and feet
• arthritis
• reduced range of motion in the neck and shoulders

**Check Your Symptoms with This Checklist**

When you first glance at the long list of TMJ symptoms, it may seem as if every ache and pain you have can be linked back to the disorder. While it is true that many sufferers experience a myriad of painful symptoms, a proper diagnosis is necessary in order to alleviate making a deadly mistake. To help you (and your doctor) better determine if TMJ may be the cause of your pain (and other symptoms), go over this symptom checklist and mark off any symptoms that you regularly experience. If you discover that you do indeed have several from each category, you may want to see a TMJ specialist for a formal diagnosis - and treatment.
**Area A: The Mouth and Jaw Area**

___ clicking, grating or jaw popping
___ pain in or around the jaw
___ pain or difficulty opening your mouth
___ chronic teeth clenching or grinding (especially at night)
___ a locked or snapping jaw
___ tooth pain
___ a tired or sore jaw (especially upon waking in the morning)
___ a deviated jaw (one that moves to one side when opening or closing the mouth)

**Area B: The Head**

___ a difficulty swallowing
___ head and/or neck spasms
___ trouble hearing
___ chronic earaches (no infection)
___ chronic headaches
___ sinus pain
___ pressure behind the eyes
___ eye tearing
Area C: The Body

___ spasms in the shoulders, neck, back, arms or even legs
___ arm/finger numbness or tingling
___ dizziness
___ insomnia
___ backaches
___ fatigue
___ depression
___ anxiousness
___ arthritis

Diagnosing Coexisting Conditions

Once you know that you have a TMJ Disorder, it’s important to figure out if any other coexisting problems exist. In 1997 Dr. Edward Wright et al designed the following questionnaire to determine if TMJ patients could also be suffering from some type of rheumatic disorder. If you answer yes to any of the following questions, be sure to consult a rheumatologist immediately:
1. Do you experience muscle tenderness anywhere but your head and neck regions?

2. Do you have joint tenderness anywhere but your jaw?

3. Do you experience any type of morning stiffness (other than in your jaw)?

4. Do you experience muscle tenderness more than 50% of the time (other than in your neck or head)?

5. Do you experience joint tenderness more than half the time other than in your jaw joint?

6. In the past year, have you experienced recurring bouts of joint swelling other than in the TM Joint?

**Checking Your Health History for Clues**

There are a number of factors that can cause your TMJ. That's why it is so important to take a close look at your health history for important clues as to what may have triggered your TMJ in order to properly treat it.
The three main factors that doctors believe can make you more susceptible to getting a TMJ Disorder are:

- **Predisposing Factors** -- an early illness that may weaken the immune system or something as simple as a chronic allergy can make you more likely to get a TMJ Disorder. Some of the most common predisposing factors associated with TMJ include:
  - any abnormality of the body
  - an accident in your childhood
  - any type of jaw abnormality
  - thumb sucking
  - a blow to the head
  - allergies
  - a severe illness

- **Precipitating Factors** -- a sudden or unusual event like an accident involving the mouth, jaw or head, or even some medications can sometimes cause TMJ. Some precipitating factors that can cause TMJ include:
  - a blow to the head (even a mild one)
- an automobile accident (especially if the air bag deploys)
- surgery of the mouth, head, neck, or face
- certain medications
- opening the mouth unusually wide (as in the case of a big yawn)

- **Perpetuating Factors** -- bad habits such as gum chewing, fingernail biting and thumb sucking can all prolong a TMJ problem. The most common perpetual factors that can contribute to TMJ symptoms include:
  - gum chewing
  - habitual jaw clenching
  - teeth grinding
  - pencil biting
  - sitting improperly at the computer
  - holding a phone on your shoulder for long periods of time
  - slouching
  - bending improperly
  - crossing your legs when sitting
  - prolonged immobility
- overstretching muscles
- putting a constricting pressure on any muscle in the body
- nutritional deficits
- tension or anxiety
- chronic infection
- impaired sleep

**Checking for TMJ in the Mirror**

Like any disease or disorder, it takes a qualified professional to make a formal diagnosis. But, there are things you can do to see if TMJ is indeed a possibility. One is to do a physical check in the mirror. To do this, look into a mirror. Now open and close your mouth. Does your jaw tend to move to the right or the left? Does your jaw make any noises when you open it? Try wider. Finally, open your mouth as wide as you possibly can, without feeling any pain. Are you able to fit **three fingers** into your mouth? If you answered yes to the first few questions and no to the last, there’s a good chance that you suffer from TMJ and should see a doctor for a formal diagnosis.
**Do a Facial Imbalance Check**

One of the clearest indicators of a jaw dysfunction (like TMJ) -- a facial imbalance -- is easy to check for. Simply stand in front of a full length mirror. This will let you see any imbalances that occur. First, look closely at your face. Do you notice if one eye is larger than the other? Does it sit higher on the face than the other? If so, do your lips turn up on the side of the higher eye? What about your ears? Is the one on the
higher side placed higher on the side of your head than the one on the opposite side? If the answer to these questions is yes, you have a jaw displacement on that side of your face. To double check these findings, look at the rest of your body. The level of your shoulders, breasts and hips should be lower on the side of the face that is higher. In addition, the leg on that side of your body will tend to be shorter.
Checking Pain Patterns for Additional Clues

Pain patterns around the head and neck region are common for TMJ patients. Some of the most common parts of the head and face that may feel tender to a firm touch include:

- above the ear
- in front of the ear
- in the ear
- in the muscles under the ear
- in the cheek muscle
- behind the neck
- in the shoulder muscles
Of course TMJ pain can radiate (or be caused by) pain in other areas of the body too. This is often the result of poor posture and faulty habits which are a direct cause of body misalignment, which can cause pains in the arms, legs, wrists, feet, toes, back and shoulders, as well as the jaw. So be sure to tell your TMJ specialist about pain you feel anywhere on your body to help him/her make the most accurate diagnosis and treatment plan.
Chapter Two:  
The Three-Step Holistic Treatment to Curing TMJ

Step One: Improve Jaw Function with
Head, Neck, Mouth, Tongue & Chin

Exercises

One of the most important things you can do to relieve your TMJ pain - and keep it from coming back - is to strengthen and help realign your jaw with some important exercises. Of course, if you can learn to stop clenching your teeth in times of stress, intense concentration and sleep, the exercises will work that much better - and faster! So take time to think about the tension in your mouth and jaw and work at avoiding any type of clenching. If you can do this during the day, you’ll notice big changes at night too. That soreness and pain in your jaw will begin to
lesson as your new exercise routine does what it’s supposed to do -
relieve your TMJ symptoms for good.

Here are some basic jaw exercises to do every day in order to get your
jaw back in perfect working order (pain free):

**Stretching the Jaw**

Those who find it difficult to open and close the jaw can benefit from
this simple jaw stretching exercise, designed to relax the opening
muscles and stretch the closing ones. *Warning: do not try this exercise if
you experience an acute strain or any type of grating, clicking or popping!*

**What to Do:**

Step #1: Place one knuckle between your teeth and gradually increase
the jaw opening.

Step #2: Rest on knuckle for app. one minute.

Step #3: As your comfort level increases, use two and then three
knuckles.
Do this simple exercise twice a day for 1-2 minutes. If soreness occurs, feel free to use either ice or heat (whichever is more comfortable) to help relieve the pain.

**Increasing the Jaw Opening**

In order to relax your jaws closing muscles and strengthen the ones used for chewing, use a gentle pressure to complete this exercise ten times, twice a day.
**What to Do:**

Step #1: Make a fist.

Step #2: Place your fist against your chin between the pointer and second fingers.

Step #3: Holding your teeth slightly apart, push upward (gently now).

Step #4: Next, open your mouth against the pressure to about the width of one finger and count to ten.

Step #5: Remove your fist from its position under your jaw and close your mouth.
**Rhythmic Jaw Stabilization**

This exercise is used to establish proper jaw placement when opening and closing the mouth. It is especially useful for people who have a deviated jaw opening which leans toward one specific side of the mouth. By promoting an even force between the TM Joint, it will help restore proper muscle balance in the mouth and jaw.

*Warning: never use excessive force when doing this exercise!*
**What to Do:**

Step #1: Place one third of your tongue on the roof of your mouth (don’t touch your teeth).

Step #2: Putting your index fingers over your chin and your thumbs under it, carefully grasp ahold of your chin.

Step #3: Open your jaw (straight down) about two-finger width in length. Use a gentle pressure to keep the jaw from moving to one side or the other.

Step #4: End by applying gentle pressure to the lower jaw as you slowly move it from side to side.
Controlled TMJ Rotation

The best way to relieve TMJ pain is to teach your jaw how to move properly once again. This can be accomplished with this simple exercise.
**What to Do:**

Step #1: Place your tongue with the front third of it resting on the roof of your mouth and your teeth not being touched.

Step #2: Place your index fingers over your Temporomandibular Joint.

Step #3: Keeping your tongue on the roof of your mouth, slowly open and close your mouth. Stop immediately if you can feel the ball of the joint move forward against your finger.
Massaging the Jaw

Massaging the jaw can be very helpful in expanding its range of motion. Be sure to do this exercise several times day, especially at night before retiring.

**What to Do:**

Step #1: Place the knuckle of the right index finger in the hinge of the jaw.

Step #2: Apply pressure to the muscles of the cheek all the way up the bone.

Step #3: Whenever you reach a tight spot, hold your knuckle there for five seconds, applying gentle pressure.
**Chewing**

One of the best exercises used to relax your jaw muscles, chewing is simple, yet effective. Of course, you’ll want to make sure that you’re doing it right, so take note to be sure that both sides of your molars move slightly apart before lightly touching again while making a chewing motion (as if you were chewing gum). Be sure to also keep your lips closed the entire time. If you’d like, feel free to make an “umm”
sound as you chew in order to open the throat more. However, this accompanying sound is not necessary for the chewing motion to work.

**The Yawn**

A good way to open the throat is to try this exercise.

*What to Do:*

Step #1: Sit or stand very straight.

Step #2: Inhale a deep gasp as if you were about to yawn.
Step #3: Take note of how your throat opens and relaxes more than usual (especially in the back).

Step #4: Drop your jaw open enough so that you can feel the indentation in front of (and adjacent to) your ear at the joint. Note: do not push your jaw down!

Step #5: Before completing this semi-yawn, exhale normally. If you allow yourself to complete the yawn you will actually close the throat.

Step #6: Repeat 8-10 times twice a day.
Reading Out Loud

One way to retrain the muscles in the jaw so they move correctly once again is to practice this reading aloud exercise for 2-5 minutes once or twice a day depending on your comfort level.

What to Do:

Step #1: Sit upright in a chair.

Step #2: Place a plastic soda cap in between your front teeth so that they are about an inch apart.

Step #3: Now, recite any of your favorite passages (a poem, bible verse, even song lyrics) for 2-5 minutes (stop if you begin to feel any real discomfort). Some people use this as a good time to read the daily newspaper.

Step #4: Be sure not to put too much pressure on the plug while you read (or talk).
**Strengthening the Jaw**

There are plenty of exercises that can help strengthen your jaw, but this is an especially good one.

**What to Do:**

Step #1: Close your lips.
Step #2: Slightly separate your teeth (keep those lips closed).

Step #3: Make the MMM sound while slowly moving your jaw up and down as if you were chewing.

Step #4: Repeat this motion continuously for 30 seconds.

Step #5: Press your tongue to your palate (the roof of your mouth).

Step #6: Swallow.

Step #7: Repeat two times.
**Surprise!**

Used to relieve tension in your jaw and open the throat, this exercise of surprise can be done whenever and wherever you like. It can’t be performed too often.

**What to Do:**

Step #1: Imagine that you see someone you haven’t been in contact with for awhile.

Step #2: Make a natural; “ahhh” sound using a medium pitch and hold it for two seconds.

Step #3: Feel as your throat opens and your palate lifts away from the tongue. Your mouth should drop open slightly, widening the back of your mouth.
Head and Neck Exercises

Once you've treated the jaw with exercises aimed at it, it's time to move onto the head and neck. By concentrating on strengthening this part of the body, you may be able to relieve much of your TMJ discomfort.
The Head/Neck Stretch

Note: do not do this exercise unless your doctor, dentist or physical therapist tells you to; otherwise you could cause even more harm.

When certain muscles in the head and neck become stiff, TMJ pain may result. The intent of this exercise is to help stretch the posterior and lateral neck muscles for relief. Be careful though. If you stretch too far (or to hard), it could cause additional injury.

What to Do:

Step #1: Gently grasp the left side of the head with your right hand.

Step #2: Reach behind your back with the other hand.

Step #3: Aim your ear toward your armpit.

Step #4: Check your posture! It should be straight!

Step #5: Tilt your head downward until you feel a gentle stretch.

Step #6: Repeat on the other side.

Step #7: Slowly increase the stretch as your comfort level increases.

Step #8: Repeat twice a day.
Shoulder Posture

One way to keep your jaw relaxed and in its proper position is to stretch your chest muscles and increase your lung capacity. This can be done by improving your shoulder posture.

*What to Do:*

Step #1: Follow all of the steps from the previous exercise.

Step #2: Now add this: pull your shoulder blades together and downward.
**Head Flex**

To stretch the muscles in your back and neck, try this simple stabilization head flexion exercise.

**What to Do:**

Step #1: Clasp hands firmly behind your neck.

Step #2: Keeping your head straight, nod in a fluid forward motion.
Neck Stretching

There are several exercises that can be used to stretch and strengthen the neck. Here are two of the best.

What to do:

Neck Stretch #1:

Step #1: Stand up straight.

Step #2: Hold your right pointer finger over your head and stick in your left ear.
Step #3: Tilt your head to the right side. Be sure to keep your eyes focused forward and your chin facing up.

Step #4: Relax your jaw.

Step #5: Pull your left hand towards the ground. You should feel a stretch down through your neck and shoulder.

Step #6: Take 5-6 deep belly breaths.

Step #7: Repeat on other side.
Neck Stretch #2:

Step #1: Point your chin to your chest.

Step #2: Lace your fingers together behind your head.

Step #3: Let the weight of your arms stretch the back of your neck (don’t pull at your neck; let gravity do the work).

Step #4: Relax your jaw.

Step #5: Breathe deeply five times.

Step #6: Lift your head back up while releasing your hands.
Axial Extension of the Neck

Learning to properly position your head can go a long way to relieving TMJ pain. This can be done quite easily with this simple exercise.

What to Do:

Step #1: Nod your head; glide your neck backward; and stretch your head upward very gently all at the same time.

Step #2: Bring your chin comfortably closer to your neck.
**Mouth, Tongue and Chin Exercises**

When working to strengthen the TM Joints and attached muscles, as well as realign any deviations, it’s important not to overlook the mouth, tongue and chin. They too can be exercised in a way that can help to alleviate painful symptoms and even cure TMJ.

**Using the Mouth and Nose to Breath**

A great exercise to use to relieve tension anywhere in your body (but especially in the jaw), breathing through the nose and mouth can be done anytime of the day or night, for as long as you like to find relief.

**What to Do:**

Step #1: Find a comfortable chair.

Step #2: Sit with your back straight.

Step #3: Start by breathing through your mouth and nose at the same time (you will notice your breathing passages opening up).

Step #4: Take your breathing a step further by inhaling deeply using the abdomen, slowly moving your breathing upward until you are using your shoulders to inhale and exhale.

Step #5: Next, exhale by letting the air out of both your nose and your mouth in a similar fashion.
Step #6: Repeat several times.

The Tongue Roll

Did you know that your tongue is the main muscle in your head and that it is connected to every other muscle there? That makes it an essential body part to keep working properly in order to avoid TMJ problems.

What to Do:

Step #1: Sit in an upright position.

Step #2: Relax your tongue, throat and jaws.
Step #3: Rest your tongue in a position in front of your front teeth.

Step #4: Next, roll your tongue around your mouth as if you were cleaning your front teeth. Be sure to complete this motion in a slow deliberate way without placing any tension on the tongue.

Step #5: Continue to roll in each direction for about one minute.

Note: you will begin to feel some tension in your tongue. That’s completely fine. You won’t hurt it by overdoing it.
**Muscle Expanders of the Mouth**

Expanding the muscles in your mouth can go a long way to relieving TMJ discomfort by strengthening the muscles surrounding the jaw.

*What to Do:*

Step #1: Close your lips.

Step #2: Separate your teeth as much as you can (but don’t open your lips – even a crack).

Step #3: Blow air into your mouth until your cheeks grow puffy. *Note: The more you can puff out your cheeks, the better muscle expansion you will generate.*

Step #4: Now, push the air from one cheek to the other - be careful not to clench!

Step #5: Push the air out while sticking out your tongue; opening your mouth real wide and dropping your jaw down toward your chest.

Step #6: Slowly close your mouth.

Step #7: Repeat four times.
**Tongue Stretches**

This exercise is a great way to stretch the tongue and open the entire throat and relax the jaw.

**What to Do:**

Step #1: Sit in an upright position.

Step #2: Relax your tongue, throat and jaw – don’t bite down!

Step #3: Stretch your tongue out of your mouth as far (and as downward) as you can without feeling any real discomfort.
Step #4: Fill your lungs with air.

Step #5: Make the “eh” sound as you empty your lungs completely of air.

Step #6: Pull your tongue back into your mouth.

Step #7: Swallow.

Step #8: Repeat 8-10 times (twice a day).
**Strengthening the Tongue**

To help strengthen your tongue, try this exercise.

*What to Do:*

Step #1: Stick out your tongue as far as possible.

Step #2: Point the tip downward for 5 seconds; then upward for another 5 seconds.

Step #3: Return the tongue to a neutral position.

Step #4: Repeat steps four times.
Gargling helps to relax the muscles in the jaw, while opening the upper throat and sinus.

**What to Do:**

Step #1: Imagine that you are gargling on an imagined “ahh” sound rather than a liquid. Keep the gargle in the upper throat, right behind the palate.

Note: you may want to practice first with a teaspoon of water until you get the actual motion down.

Step #2: Repeat twice a day. Caution: doing this exercise too much can give you a sore throat.
The Chin Drop

To help relax your neck and shoulders, try this handy exercise.

Step #1: First, drop your chin as far down your chest as possible. Be careful to keep your neck straight, but not stiff.

Step #2: Raise your head, stretching it as far back as you can without causing any discomfort.

Step #3: Repeat 12 times (twice a day) in a slow, relaxed manner.
**Step Two:**

**Using Diet, Exercise and Vitamin/Mineral Supplementation to Cure TMJ**

**A. Vitamin and Mineral Therapy**

It isn’t at all unusual for a TMJ sufferer to be lacking certain vitamins and minerals in their diet. Does this in itself cause TMJ? Probably not. But, not giving your body the nutrients it needs to run properly can affect how you feel; how your body heals itself and what other symptoms you may experience.

While proper diet is extremely important in both preventing and treating TMJ, we’re going to begin with vitamins first, to help you better understand how certain vitamin deficiencies may be affecting your TMJ pain and current treatment plan.
TMJ has been linked to two main vitamin/mineral deficiencies: calcium and magnesium.

**Magnesium**

If there’s any one vitamin or mineral that can cure TMJ pain, it may be magnesium. Certainly, it is not a cure-all, but for most people, increasing their intake of magnesium can lesson symptoms dramatically and help improve their quality of life, especially while they research their own perfect TMJ cure.

Essential for muscle relaxation and neurotransmission, magnesium if often lacking in today’s diet. With so many prepared foods being served at the dinner table these days, many people simply don’t get the proper amount of magnesium. This can often be remedied by simply returning to the basics: plenty of fresh vegetables including: legumes and beans. Easting freshly prepared soup is a wonderful way to meet your magnesium requirements in a tasty way.
Some of the best magnesium rich foods you may want to include in your daily eating plan include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Item</th>
<th>Serving</th>
<th>Mg. Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artichoke</td>
<td>1 medium (cooked)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baking Chocolate (unsweetened)</td>
<td>1 square</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barley (raw)</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baked Beans (canned)</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans (kidney)</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbeans (cooked)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckwheat Flour</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals (min0wheats)</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornmeal</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowpeas</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Food Taco</td>
<td>1 large</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish (flounder, sole)</td>
<td>1 fillet</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lima Beans</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk (canned/condensed)</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Serving Size</td>
<td>Calories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muffins (oat bran)</td>
<td>1 muffin</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oat bran (raw)</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okra</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>1 oz.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkins Seeds</td>
<td>1 ounce</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refried Beans</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice (brown, long grained)</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soymilk</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Potatoes (mashed)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat Flour</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yogurt</td>
<td>8 oz.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, some people may want to simply take a magnesium supplement. While mineral supplementation is a valid option for some, most doctors don’t encourage it since many multi-vitamins simply do not contain the levels necessary to rectify a magnesium deficiency; and
many people who have low magnesium levels also need other important nutrients found in these healthy foods but not in the supplements offered.

**Calcium**

Calcium is an important bone-building mineral that your body needs to stay healthy – and work properly. Unfortunately, most people who suffer from a magnesium deficiency also lack the right amount of calcium, so they need to be sure to get at least 1,000 mg. per day. One reason may be that without the proper amounts of magnesium in your system, your body has a hard time regulating and metabolizing calcium.

Don’t want to rely solely on milk products to get your daily requirements of calcium? The good news is that there are plenty of calcium rich foods out there and they are easy to find – and tasty to eat!

Which foods are richest in calcium? Here are just a few:

- Dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt, eggnog)
• Canned salmon and sardines (with bones)
• Leafy green vegetables (such as broccoli, legumes, spinach, kale)
• Almonds and nuts
• Seeds
• Legumes
• Figs
• Tofu
• Rhubarb
• Collard greens
• Turnip greens
• Okra
• White beans
• Baked beans
• Peas
• Brussel sprouts
• Sesame seeds
• Bok choy
• Calcium-fortified foods (orange juice, cereal, drink mixes, muffins and breads, instant breakfast cereals/oatmeal, soymilk)
Must-Have Vitamins and Minerals for Battling TMJ

Your body can’t work without the right mix of important vitamins and minerals. Here’s a complete list of those you’ll need to help battle your TMJ pain (and what foods you can find them in):

**Vitamin A** - An important antioxidant that helps to fight infection and keep mucous membranes healthy, vitamin A can be found in the following foods: liver, fish liver, oranges, carrots, squash, broccoli, spinach, pumpkin, eggs, cheese, butter, apricots, and grapefruit.

**Vitamin B1 Thiamine** - An essential vitamin for the growth and functioning of the nervous system tissues, thiamine can be found in: pork, beef, organ meats, whole wheat, enriched cereals, nuts, dried peas and beans.

**Vitamin B2 Riboflavin** - Necessary for proper cell growth, riboflavin can be found in: liver, milk, (and milk products), dark green
leafy vegetables, oysters, eggs, mushrooms, avocados, pasta and whole grains.

**Vitamin B3 Niacin** - An essential nutrient for forming the red blood cells needed for optimal health, niacin is a good energy producer and metabolism enhancer. It can be found in the following foods: organ meats, peanuts, poultry, muscle meats, legumes, whole grains, milk and eggs.

**Vitamin B6 Pyridoxine** - Used to make red blood and immune system cells, vitamin B6 can be found in: bananas, soybeans, poultry, organ meats, dried beans, peanuts, walnuts, avocado, salmon, whole grain cereals and breads, wheat germ, egg yolk, broccoli, spinach and tuna (fresh, not canned).

**Vitamin B12 Cyanocobalamin** - Essential to maintaining a healthy nervous system, B12 helps red blood cells to grow normally and is found in the following foods: meats, poultry, liver, seafood, egg yolks, milk and cheese.
**Folic Acid** - Essential for the production of new cells, bone marrow and red blood cells, folic acid is most commonly found in: dark green leafy vegetables, organ meats, kidney beans, asparagus, beets, cabbage, yeast, cauliflower, cantaloupe, wheat germ and whole grains cereals and breads.

**Vitamin C** - An important antioxidant that is essential for proper bone growth, infection resistance and teeth and gum health, Vitamin C is most commonly found in: citrus fruits, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, green leafy vegetables, cantaloupe and strawberries.

**Vitamin D** - Used to help the body absorb calcium and phosphorous, Vitamin D is necessary for normal bone and tooth growth and can be found in: fortified milk, fish liver, egg yolk, butter and oily fish (such as salmon, herring and sardines).
**Vitamin E** - An important antioxidant that prevents the destruction of red blood cells, vitamin E is found in: vegetable oils and seeds, wheat germ, margarine, green leafy vegetables, whole grain cereals and breads, egg yolks, nuts, seeds, milk, butter and milk fat.

**Vitamin K** - Helps the body better clot blood, vitamin K is found in: milk products (milk, butter, and yogurt).

**Panthothenic Acid** - Necessary for the body to produce energy, it is found in these foods: liver, organ meats, fish, eggs, cheese, whole grain cereals and breads, avocado, cauliflower, green peas, dried beans, nuts, dates and sweet potatoes.

**Biotin** - Essential for using carbs, proteins and fats within the body, biotin is found in: liver, organ meats, egg yolk, milk, yeast, whole grains, nuts and legumes.
**Calcium** - Necessary for bone formation, blood clotting, muscle relaxation and nerve impulses, calcium is in these common foods: diary products, tofu, dark green leafy vegetables, canned fish (with edible bones), nuts, beans and dried peas.

**Copper** - Works with iron to produce blood cells, copper can be found in: shellfish, whole grains, nuts, eggs, dried beans, peas, and dark green leafy vegetables.

**Iron** - Helps to build blood cells and transport oxygen throughout the body, iron is found in: liver, organ meats, beef, dried fruits, peas, beans, dark green leafy vegetables, prune juice, and whole grains.

**Phosphorous** -- essential for the maintenance and repair of all cells within the body, phosphorous is in these foods: meat, soda pop, fish, poultry, eggs, cereals, legumes and most processed foods

**Potassium** -- the #1 nutrient cells need, potassium helps to regulate muscle contractions and nerve transmissions throughout the body. It is found in these important foods: potatoes, bananas, orange juice,
apricots, cantaloupe, broccoli, meat, milk, peanut butter, lima beans, mushrooms, tomatoes, and cabbage.

**Selenium** - An antioxidant that protects cell membranes and enhances vitamin E. It is found in: liver, kidney beans, Meta, seafood, whole grains, clams, oysters, sunflower seeds and garlic.

**Zinc** - Essential for skin growth and wound healing, zinc is in: oysters, herring, clams, meat, chicken, dairy, eggs, wheat germ, bran and nuts.
B. Evaluating Your Diet

Now that you know what important vitamins and minerals you should be getting in your diet, it’s time to see if you are - and if not, what you are lacking.

If you’ve ever heard the saying “you are what you eat,” than you should understand the importance your diet plays in keeping you (and your jaw) healthy and strong.

The simple fact is: your body can not run properly without good fuel. Feed it the wrong foods day in and day out; depriving it of essential nutrients and you’ll pay the price one way or another. If you suffer from TMJ that price may be increased pain and additional symptoms to deal with.

What Are You Eating?

The first place to begin an evaluation of your diet is to keep a daily food log for a week or so. In it, write down everything you eat through the
day (yes, even those snacks!), as well as the amount of each food item. Don’t worry, we’re not worried about calories or fat intake; we’re looking at substance here. This is a good way to see what important vitamins and minerals you get on a daily basis, and which ones you are likely lacking.

Once you have compiled your food list, take each day and separate the foods you ate into these standardized food group categories (refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture food pyramid illustration below):
Category One: Bread, Cereal, Rice & Pasta

Most experts agree that you should eat at least 6-11 servings of bread, grains and pasta each day for optimal health. Keep in mind that loading up on lots of white bread isn’t best, however. Instead, opt for whole grains or even gluten-free breads and grains instead. The same is true for pasta and rice. When choosing foods in this section, always look for darker varieties - they are the most nutritious.

Category Two: Fruits

Keeping up with your daily fruit requirements isn’t hard. With only 2-4 servings needed for the average adult, simply adding some fruit to your morning cereal; drinking a glass of juice at breakfast and having a fruit as a snack every day will give you just what you need.

Category Three: Vegetables

Fulfilling your vegetable requirements each day may mean thinking outside of the box a little, especially if veggies aren’t your favorite. But consider this: one large salad chockfull of mixed greens, carrots,
cucumbers and other assorted raw veggies can easily give you at least half of the 3-5 servings of vegetables you need in a day. Add to that a veggie drink like V8 Splash or some other variety and cook up a bowl of your favorite fresh or frozen veggies at dinner and you're set. Just be sure to stay away from canned vegetables since they are high in salt and low on nutrients.

**Category Four: Milk, Yogurt & Cheese**

With a mere 2-3 servings of dairy products needed in a day, it shouldn't be hard to get the right amount into your diet. Just be sure to choose hormone-free milk products whenever possible and try adding some milk or cheese to your other foods to help you better meet your daily requirements.

**Category Five: Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs & Nuts**

This is one category most of us don’t have trouble fulfilling the requirements for. If anything, we need to cut back in these food group
items. When calculating a meat servings remember this simple rule: one serving is about the same size and depth as a deck of cards. This food group includes all meat, fish, poultry, nuts (including peanut butter) and even eggs! With only 2-3 servings needed every day, it may be time to readjust your eating to include less of these items and more of the ones listed above.

**Category Six: Fats and Sweets**

OK, this is where the food pyramid gets a little hard to follow. Look at the tippy top of the pyramid. See that tiny tip marked fats and sweets? These are the things you aren’t really supposed to eat. I know, I know, this is the good stuff. Without any real serving suggestions recommended, the fact is that we aren’t supposed to be eating those cookies and cakes every day - only once in awhile. So consider that the next time you reach for a snack!

Once you have categorized your daily foods intake, and compared it to each categories requirements, you should have a clear picture of how well (or poorly) your eating habits really are. For some people, this is a
big wake-up call, showing them how they may have been hurting their health, and enhancing their TMJ problems through the foods they were eating (and the ones they weren’t).

Of course knowing what to eat, and actually eating it are two different things. So, we’re going to start by listing a variety of must-eat foods (and a few you should definitely stay away from) to help whatever TMJ treatment you choose actually work better by giving your body the fuel it needs to heal itself.

**Must-Eat Foods for Healthy Temporomandibular Joints**

**Artichokes**

**Baking Chocolate**

**Barley**

**Beans (any variety)**

**Breads (whole grain)**

**Buckwheat Flour**
Bulgar

Cereal (preferably whole grains)

Cornmeal

Egg Yolks

Fish (any variety)

Fresh Fruits

Green leafy vegetables

Meat

Milk (regular or soy)

Oat bran

Organ meat

Peanuts (all types)

Poultry

Pumpkin seeds

Rice (brown)

Soybeans (and other soy products)

Spinach

Squash

Sweet Potatoes

Vegetables (yellow and green varieties)
Wheat flour

Yogurt

What Not To Eat When You Have TMJ or Teeth

Grinding

Now that you have a better idea of what you should be eating, let’s list a few things to stay away from:

Gum

Candy

Ice cubes

Bagels and chewy breads

Croutons

Raisins or other dried fruits

Popcorn, crunchy chips and sunflower seeds

Most processed foods

Any foods high in salt, sugars and preservatives
Practical Ways to Eat Better and Improve Your Nutrition

Oftentimes people want a quick fix to their nutritional problems and tend to use supplements. While supplements are great for hard-to-get vitamins and minerals, the vast majority of your nutrition should come from the foods you eat. Here are some practical tips to eating better and getting just the right mix of vitamins and minerals each and every day:

- Eat fresh whenever possible. Whether you are choosing fruits, veggies or meats, opt for fresh whenever you can. Frozen are good too, but canned foods lose a lot of their nutritional value through the canning process. Plus, they often contain unhealthy additives and preservatives.

- Consider your own personal needs and interests when choosing your food. Not everyone likes the same things, so be sure you pick what interests you most.

- Make your plate into a rainbow at each meal. The more colors you see, the better nutritional balance you have achieved. If all of your
foods look alike, the odds are you aren’t meeting all of your vitamin and mineral requirements.

- If you smoke get more vitamin C in your diet since cigarettes will reduce your Vitamin C levels.
- Avoid processed foods when possible.
- Go dark. Eat plenty of dark whole grain cereals, breads, pasta and rice products and darker green vegetables for the best balance.
- Use supplements to get the right amount of Vitamin E (most of us simply can't get it from food). The recommended dosage is 400 IU a day.
- Eat only organic and hormone free meats. Every time you eat something that contains an additive, preservative or artificial flavor, you are not only robbing your body of the chance to get the right nutrients from that particular food, but you are stripping your body of the nutrients it has already collected. How? When you add these elements to your body, it is forced to use valuable nutrients to detoxify it. This can cause numerous problems, including TMJ.
- Avoid refined carbohydrates. Most of the food we eat comes with essential vitamins and minerals. Our bodies take these elements
and use them to metabolize the food more easily. Unfortunately, when whole grains are refined, many of these important minerals are stripped away. If you eat too many refined carbohydrates like white bread, plain pasta and white rice, your body may be forced to tap into its mineral stores to get what it needs. This can oftentimes result in a zinc or folic acid deficiency in your body. Another, even healthier option to consider: replacing grains with non-gluten containing varieties such as buckwheat, millet, quinoa and amaranth. They’re not only tasty, they’re much better for you and your TMJ!

- Eat sensible portions. We live in a super-sized society, where we all think more is better. Not so when it comes to our food consumption. Eating a well-balanced and well-proportioned diet is always best for optimal health.

Still not sure what you should and should not be eating; or how much of each you should be getting on a daily basis? Consider speaking with a licensed dietician to get those questions answered. Plus, most freely offer invaluable tips and recipes to get you on a good start to a
more healthful eating plan. If possible, find one that understands TMJ (and the effect your diet can have on it) for even more help!

**Things to Consider...**

Eating small portions of lean red meats and dairy products is necessary in order to get the right mix of vitamins and minerals in your diet. It’s equally important to look for the safest products possible. When buying meats and dairy products always look for organic varieties that come from organic-fed sources. In regards to dairy, opt for organic sheep or goat’s milk and use eggs from organic free range sources to eliminate the possibility of ingesting dangerous pesticides and/or hormones.

**Quick Fixes: Simple Meal Ideas to Get You Started**

Need a few ideas to get you started eating right at mealtime? Try these simple recipe ideas until you better understand what changes you need to incorporate into your daily diet:
Breakfast:

Instant Oatmeal

Instant Breakfast Drinks

Fresh Fruit

Applesauce

Eggs (cooked/any variety)

Cottage Cheese

Whole Grain Cereals

Lunch and/or Dinner:

Tuna Salad

Egg Salad

Crab Meat

Chicken

Yogurt

Soft Vegetables (to avoid hard chewing)

Mashed Potatoes

Whole Grain/Wheat Breads (soft/no crust)

Soup (any variety)

Seafood (any variety)
Chili
Lean meats
Stuffing
Pasta
Tofu
Rice (brown)
Beans
Macaroni and Cheese
Chinese Food Varieties
C. Daily Body and Relaxation Exercises

Used to Relieve TMJ Pain & Keeping Your Muscles in Top Tone

Your body is a well tuned machine – well it should be anyway. It’s amazing how the intricate design of our bodies work together with each part to make another work. Unfortunately, too many of us neglect certain parts of our bodies, only to find out later that it has affected another seemingly unassociated part. For instance, who thinks that not exercising your calves enough could cause TMJ. Yet, letting any muscle group in your body to deteriorate can indeed cause TMJ flare-ups.

Each and every muscle in our body is meant to be moved. None should remain immobile for very long. Unless we continually stretch our muscles to their full range we’re going to experience a variety of painful problems.
Gentle, slow stretching of the muscles is the absolute best way to keep them in tip-top shape. Strenuous exercise that incites pain or discomfort isn’t necessary to achieve the desired results. Simple, slow movements are best when it comes to stretching and strengthening your body’s muscles and relieving myofascial pain.

**Yoga to the Rescue**

One of the most effective (and safest) ways to stretch your muscles and strengthen your joints is by incorporating simple yoga techniques into your exercise regime.

The basic concept of yoga is simple: by learning certain body positions a joint can be remobilized, becoming more flexible. In addition, every muscle group in the entire body is gradually strengthened. With so much emphasis placed on balance and symmetry, yoga strives to reach every muscle in the body; thereby
eliminating the risk of strengthening some while others grow weaker.

Of course this can take some time, since each stretch must be mastered slowly in order to avoid damage or pain. This is done by stretching the fiber around the joint without overstretching it - that causes pain! This can be done in two ways:

1. By using ballistic (rapid) stretching.

2. By using passive stretching.

In yoga, passive stretching is most common, allowing the muscles, tendons and ligaments to stretch more slowly, without going into spasm. This can take up to five minutes, so patience is required.

When utilizing yoga and other stretching exercises to alleviate your TMJ pain, be sure to keep these eight simple rules in mind:

1. Never bounce - this can cause muscle spasms.

2. Keep your entire body aligned properly at all times.

3. Stretch your muscles every day to keep them relaxed. Otherwise they will shorten and harden, which could actually make you shorter.
4. Muscles need to stretch in order to stay relaxed, which allows good blood and oxygen flow to the muscles.

5. Tight muscles hamper joints and synovial fluid flow, which can limit range of motion.

6. Yoga helps to balance muscle strength, unlike many other exercises which actually create an imbalance and misalignment by making muscles on one side stronger than the other.

7. Tight muscles that aren’t regularly stretched can cause serious misalignment and uneven wear and tear on the joints.

8. Stretching the different ligaments around your joints can help realign them and relieve pain in various spots throughout the body.

**Posture Perfect Results**

Maintaining good posture is essential to preventing muscle contraction and shortening that can exacerbate TMJ pain. Keep this in mind: when you slouch, your neck is forced to carry the weight of your shoulders and head, requiring other muscle groups to take over
the necks original job. This causes tension and strain throughout the body, which can trigger pain almost anywhere - including the jaw.

**Let’s Get Started...**

Ready to get started stretching those muscles and getting them in tip-top shape? Great! Here you’ll find a variety of exercises designed specifically for relieving TMJ pain. As is the case when starting any new exercise program, see your doctor first and take it slowly. As your muscles begin to relax and stretch, it will become easier and easier to stretch them further and further. Patience is the key. Do each exercise as described using slow, smooth motions for best results.
Body Exercises for Relieving TMJ Pain

Exercise #1: The Mountain Pose

Can you believe that your head weighs between 9-13 pounds? That’s a lot of weight for four small vertebrae to balance. That’s why it is so vital that we all learn – but especially those suffering with TMJ – to stand the right way – all of the time. If we don’t, our entire body can be thrown out of balance, which can cause serious pain – especially in the jaw!

The mountain pose is a standard posture pose designed to keep the body in perfect alignment for a pain-free result. To obtain this pose be sure to:

- stand evenly on both feet
- point your toes forward
- keep your feet either together or slightly apart
- keep your head level and balanced on top of your spine at all times
- keep your shoulders relaxed and down
• keep your chest up

• keep your abdomen relaxed

• make sure that all four corners of your feet are pressing down on the floor
Head retracted

Head protruded

Shoulders rounded

Total body off balance
Exercise #2: The Shoulder Roll

Standing in the mountain pose described above, slowly rotate your shoulders in circles (first backward and then forward) five to ten times in each direction.

Exercise #3: The Upper Back Stretch

Begin by standing in the mountain pose as described in exercise #1. Then, placing your fingers on your shoulders, pull your elbows together (in front of your chest). Rotate your arms in large circles
(keeping those fingers on your shoulders), first forward and then backward - slowly now! Repeat 5-10 times in each direction.

**Exercise #4: Arm Circles/Stretch**

Standing in the mountain pose, hold your hands out to your sides at shoulder length. Keep your palms up. Next, make small forward and backward circles with your arms (about 5-10 in each direction). Once you’ve completed the circles, stretch your arms by locking your fingers together (palms up) and over your head upward until you feel a slight
stretch. Again, take it slowly. Lift too high too fast and you could hurt yourself. Hold stretch for several seconds, repeating 5-10 times.

Exercise #5: Head and Neck Circles

As always, begin this exercise in the original mountain pose. Then, push your head downward and around to the right in a large circle 5-20 times before changing direction. If you feel any pain at all, stop.
Exercise #6: Pectoral and Pelvic Stretch

The next two exercises should be done on a floor or bed with a hard mattress for best results.
**Pectoral Stretch:**

Clasp your hands behind your head while sitting in a chair. Now, stretch your arms back until you feel a slight (gentle) stretch in your chest. You may use the back of the chair for support if needed. Hold this pose for several seconds. Then repeat 5-10 times.
**Pelvic Stretch:**

Lie on your back with your knees bent and both feet firmly planted on the floor. Make sure that your hand can easily slip under your waist to check your position. Next, press your back downward until your hand no longer is able to slide underneath your back. With your arms clasped under your head, arch your back up with your belly button reaching for the sky. Hold for several seconds. Repeat up and down sequence up to ten times.

**Exercise #7: Spine Roll**

Try this exercise before retiring for the evening. It’s a great way to relax.

Step #1: Lie on your back.

Step #2: Pull your knees up to your chest (keep them together).

Step #3: Rest in that position for several seconds.

Step #4: Roll to one side, then the other.

Step #5: Repeat 3-4 times.
Alternative Spine Roll:

Keeping your upper body flat (make sure your shoulders aren't tense), then move only your hips from side to side (slowly now).

Exercise #8: The Cat Stretch

Have you ever watched a cat stretch (I mean really stretch)? See how relaxed they seem afterward? You can get that same feeling with this basic exercise: Position yourself on your hands and knees, arching your back as you inhale. Be sure that your tailbone is pointed toward the
ceiling. As you round your back, exhale, pulling in your tummy. Now, tuck in your tailbone. Repeat 5-6 times.

Exercise #9: The Hamstring Stretch

There are two good hamstring stretches to try. The first uses a belt for positioning and muscle stretching. Begin Exercise #1 by lying flat, with your knees bent. Pull the right leg up toward your chest, placing the belt around your right foot. Gently pull the leg straight up. Finish by
bringing both legs down to a resting position. Repeat on the other side.

Do this repetition 2-3 times on each leg.

**Exercise #2** uses a chair for support. Begin by bending forward, clasping your hands around the back of the chair. Keep your legs straight (no bending at the knees); the tailbone pointed toward the ceiling and the spine straight. Hold this position for 15-30 seconds. Repeat several times.
Exercise #10: The Doorway Stretch

Using a doorway for support is a good way to stretch your chest, shoulders and back. Begin by placing your hands on either side of the doorjamb at about shoulder level. Stepping forward with your left foot, stretch your body forward. Hold for several seconds, and then repeat using the right foot. For an even deeper stretch, try bringing your arms up a bit higher (or lower). Repeat several times per day.
**Exercise #11: Stretching the Back**

Here’s a great back stretch to try while sitting:

Step #1: Sit on a chair (make sure that your feet are touching the floor).

Step #2: Gently (and slowly) bend forward.

Step #3: Let your hands dangle toward the floor (stop when you feel a slight stretch to your back).

Step #4: Hold this position for 15-30 seconds.

Step #5: Repeat 3-4 times.
Step Three:

Eliminating Harmful Habits &

Identifying/Treating Stressors and

Referred Pain from Those Trigger Points

Getting Rid of Those Harmful Habits

There are a lot of things that we do that can perpetuate and worsen our TMJ symptoms. Unfortunately, no treatment is going to work if the patient refuses to take responsibility for their actions and begins the hard work of breaking those habits that may be flaring up their TMJ. While every sufferers triggers are different, most habits that increase (or even cause) TMJ pain can be categorized into these basic groups:

- Postural Habits
- Oral
• Muscular Habits

• Eating Habits

Now, let’s take a closer look at each and learn what you can do to recognize (and break) these painful TMJ instigators.

**Postural Habits**

Poor posture doesn't just make you look bad - it can make you feel awful too! And I'm not just talking about the aches and pains it can cause. I'm talking about some real medical conditions your poor posture can induce, or even aggravate. TMJ is one of them.

All-too-often, total body posture is overlooked as a contributing factor to TMJ. However, the Atlas of Temporomandibular Orthopedics cited in a report by Steven Smith that a relationship does indeed exist between jaw dysfunctions (including TMJ) and a person's posture.

Every TMJ sufferer has their own set of trigger points that can cause a painful flare-up. The muscles and joints causing your jaw pain don’t necessarily have to be found in your head, neck or face. As we discussed
earlier, irritated fascia in any part of the body can trigger pain in and around the jaw. How you stand, sit and walk all day - every day - can irritate those trigger points, ultimately leading to severe TMJ discomfort.

That said, many experts disagree as to whether a person’s poor posture is causing their TMJ, or if their TMJ is causing their bad posture. An interesting dilemma to say the least. The fact of the matter is this: it doesn’t matter which disorder starts the ball rolling. If you treat them both you can relieve a sufferer’s agony once and for all!

So why is your posture so important in the prevention and treatment of TMJ? The simple fact is that proper body alignment begins with your posture, and any type of misalignment can affect the jaw joints. So, let’s learn how to get our posture perfect.
Standing

Look around and you’ll see an awful lot of people slouching. Yikes!

Doesn’t anyone know how to stand straight and tall anymore? Maybe not. But you’re going to learn how right now.

The lower back contains a hollow called the lumbar lordosis (otherwise known as the lumbar curve). It naturally follows the curve of the spine.

You neck has its own inward curve called the cervical curve (or cervical lordosis). In order to hold a proper posture position, you need to try and keep these two curves in their natural positions as much as possible. One way to do this is to adopt the mountain pose as described earlier.
Lifting

Considering the fact that the average human lifts objects several hundred times a day (and most are doing it all wrong), it’s no wonder 35 million Americans suffer with backaches on a daily basis! Isn’t it about time that you learned how to properly lift objects - no matter how heavy or light they may seem?
Step #1: Strive to keep the lower lordosis in your back while bending at the knee (not the waist)!

Step #2: Hold the object as close to you as possible.

Step #3: Lean back (staying in balance), then lift.

Note: never twist at the waist when turning. Instead, shift your feet in the direction in which you want to go.

Bad Lifting Posture
Walking

The odds are you've been walking since you were about a year old.

Similarly true is the fact that for years now you've probably been doing it all wrong. To walk correctly - and avoid painful problems in the future - be sure to always:

- stand straight
- bring your shoulders up and back
- use the strength of your neck to hold your head up high
**Sitting**

People sit an awful lot these days - something the human body was not designed for. Add to that the ways in which most of us sit and we’re all headed for major back pain somewhere down the line.

The best seated position is one that constantly maintains the inward curve of the lower back (using some sort of support usually helps you to keep this position for longer periods of time). Of course, it’s also important to get up and move around periodically to unlock the muscles and joints that are keeping your sitting upright.

While I can tell you over and over again how to sit correctly, it may be easier if I describe how **not to sit**. This way, you can recognize the mistakes you are personally making in order to rectify them in an attempt to relieve some (if not all) of your TMJ pain.
**The Phone Position**

A very common position these days, when you hold the phone on your shoulder and under your chin for long periods of time throughout the day, you place a lot of strain on your neck and shoulder muscles/ligaments. This can cause serious TMJ pain, so avoid it if at all possible.
The Chair Position (asleep)

If you've ever fallen asleep in a chair or couch, you probably already know how much your neck can hurt when you wake up. Look at the depth of your favorite napping chair. If it is too long, you'll likely slouch once you fall asleep. To avoid straining those neck and shoulder muscles, add a lumbar roll for support to help you maintain the correct sitting position - even if you happen to doze off for awhile.
**The Couch**

How do you sit on your couch to relax? The odds are you slouch or lean a bit, with a big gap at your lower back. This is a sign of trouble. It’s time to support your lower back by using a lumbar support or cushions to alleviate any unnecessary strain.
The Bed Prop

When sitting in bed either reading, watching TV or just relaxing, be sure to always use some form of support for your head and neck in order to maintain a straight line running from your head to your hips.

Driving

Most people drive with their head protruded and their back flat. This is bound to put an unnatural strain on your back, neck and shoulders, which can ultimately result in TMJ pain. You can relieve this strain by
simply stuffing a rolled towel or lumbar support between your lower back and/or head and the car’s seat. This will help keep both your back and your head in the right positions while you drive.

**Sitting Without Any Support**

If you are a parent who must sit on backless bleachers for hours on end, consider taking along your own seat to the game. If you’re a player, be sure to pay attention to the way you’re sitting. I know it’s hard without any type of back support, but it’s very important to avoid leaning or slouching and try to sit tall and straight as much as possible.
**Working at a Desk**

The average American worker sits at their desk between 6-10 hours every day. That’s a lot of sitting - especially if you’re doing it wrong!

Most of us sit at our desk or computer with a rounded back, only to feel stiff and sore at the end of the workday - and long into the night. This is due to an overstretching of the ligaments in our backs caused by the slumped or rounded posture we hold for such long periods of time.
When working at your desk, try to:

- keep your lower back supported to more easily maintain that lower curve
- keep your feet flat on the floor
- keep your shoulders relaxed
- keep your forearms level or tilted slightly upward
- make sure to change positions (or better yet get up and move around) for just a minute or two every half hour
Sleeping

If you often wake up feeling stiff and sore in the neck, the odds are you are putting an extra strain on your neck muscles by sleeping on your stomach. You can actually stretch these muscles to capacity sleeping in this position and should avoid it or risk experiencing some real TMJ pain later on!
Relaxing After Strenuous Activity

Many people report back pain after engaging in some sort of strenuous activity or exercise. While they may first suspect the activity for causing their pain, the odds are it is the posture they use right afterward. Think about it: as soon as you're done exercising, don't you usually plop down on your favorite chair for a few minutes of relaxation? If so, check your posture. If you're slouching, that’s the culprit - not the exercise or activity! The easiest way to avoid any post-activity discomfort is to engage in some slow stretches afterward including the head/neck extension which simply requires extending your head and neck a few times to strengthen and lengthen those muscles after a tense workout.

Oral Habits to Break

Most people traumatize their jaw numerous times every day simply by continuing certain bad oral habits that put stress on the temporomandibular joint in their jaw.
For instance, people who clench their jaw and/or teeth are causing a dangerous constriction, which over time can cause a type of blunt force trauma to the jaw which may actually change the structure and posture of the face, neck and jaw. It’s amazing the damage something as simple as clenching your teeth over and over again can cause.

Whenever the muscles and tendons surrounding a joint are traumatized, they (along with adjoining ligaments), will begin to tighten as a way to protect the joint. This makes them ache, thus making them function abnormally due to the strain and pain being experienced. This only creates more problems - including TMJ.

Some of the most common oral habits that can cause this sort of trauma include:

- tightening of the jaw when stressed
- clenching or grinding the teeth
- gum chewing
- always chewing foods on one side of the mouth
- holding the tongue in the wrong position
- incorrect head and neck posture
• constantly holding objects in the teeth (pencils, pens, paper clips)
• pencil chewing
• nail biting

The good news is that the vast majority of TMJ problems are muscles oriented - not jaw oriented - and can be remedied if these negative oral habits are dealt with. The hard part is dealing with these habits, especially those you experience at night. It can be hard to stop grinding your teeth without an apparatus or oral appliance since you have little control over what your mouth and jaw does while you're asleep. Still, you need to do your best to find any way at all to break those bad habits including hypnotherapy, relaxation techniques or even biofeedback under severe circumstances.

Muscular Habits

One of the biggest mistakes people make is assuming that they should stop exercising altogether when their muscles hurt. This assumption is wrong! The body is meant to be moved, and if you don’t move, your muscles will begin to atrophy, leaving you in worse physical shape than
when you began. It takes less than 48 hours of inactivity for your muscles to begin to break down. Continue to remain immobile for too long and they will cease to work properly at all, making it harder (and more painful) to do just about everything.

The problem is, too much (or too strenuous) of an exercise can be harmful too. If you live by the adage “no pain, no gain,” you could be setting yourself up for even more discomfort down the line. Pain is a sign that something is wrong. It may mean you’ve sustained an injury, or it could be a simple warning that you’re about to. Listen to what your body is trying to tell you when exercising. Feeling “the burn” is acceptable. Feeling pain is not.

**Bad Nutritional Habits**

Let’s face it: most of us stink at eating a properly balanced diet. We live on fast food; easy fixes; and dare I say, junk food?! Far too many of our diets lack the basic vitamins and minerals our bodies need to remain healthy and strong. That’s why we face so many more maladies than people of years past. At a time when medical technology can treat and
cure so many devastating diseases, it seems ironic that we’re causing even more problems by the foods we eat - and don’t eat.

Eating a well balanced and nutritious diet is the cornerstone to good health - and a strong jaw! So, let’s learn more about breaking our bad habits (all of them) and breaking free from TMJ Pain.

**Breaking Those Bad Habits**

Sad, but true, bad habits don’t just disappear all on their own. They take hard work and persistence to break. But, considering the amount of pain your bad habits are causing, it’s well worth the effort to get your bad habits under control now rather than later.

There are several steps to breaking any type of bad habit including:

- Becoming aware of your bad habits. Watch yourself constantly for the reappearance of your bad habits. Check yourself every 20 minutes or so for those nasty (and often unconscious) oral habits that are causing you pain like nail biting, pencil chewing and jaw tightening. Until you become more aware of what you’re doing
(and how it is affecting your health and well-being), you won’t be able to stop yourself.

• Understanding the necessity of making a change. Breaking bad habits is hard, and unless you have a good reason for doing so, the odds are you won’t stick to your plan. Take the time to talk with your health care provider about the negative effects that your habits are having on your health. Once you completely understand how much relief you will experience from that constant and debilitating jaw pain when you break your habits, it’ll be much easier to tackle them.

• Learning what steps to take to break your bad habits. Saying you are going to stop certain behaviors may not be enough to do it. You may need a little help. For instance nail biters often use a flavored fingernail polish to break their habit; while sleeping teeth grinders wear a dental apparatus for awhile.

• Make a commitment to replace your bad habits with good ones. Without a firm plan and commitment for change, the odds are you’ll continue on as usual - in painful agony.

• Tackling one bad habit at a time. There’s no point in trying to change everything at once. Choose one habit at a time to break
(starting with the easiest), and work your way down the list.

Hopefully it's not too long.

- Be persistent (and patient). Some habits are harder to break than other and require more patience. Give yourself a break if you slip up and recognize that even the smallest step forward is indeed just that - a step in the right direction. If by chance you find yourself falling backwards, then stop, regroup, forgive yourself, and begin again.
Identifying and Eliminating the Stressors in Your Life

Stress can cause a lot of trouble in your life. It can cause anxiousness and depression, not to mention a myriad of health issues. From high blood pressure and heart disease to diabetes, stress can be a contributing factor to just about any ailment. TMJ is no exception! Think of it this way: if your body is constantly thrown into a fight or flight response to ordinary problems that occur, your entire body will begin to wear down and tire out. Your immune system will begin to fail. Your muscular system will be traumatized (causing a break-down in your muscles, tendons and ligaments), and even your joints will begin to hurt. Yes, stress can - and does - do all that - AND MORE! There’s no telling what excess stress in your life is doing to your health and well being – not to mention your jaw joints!

In study after study, TMJ and its resulting symptoms have been directly linked to the affects of stress. Now, that doesn’t mean that stress is the actual cause of your TMJ pain, but it is likely increasing its severity.
Stress can cause you to habitually grind your teeth or clench your jaw, which does cause TMJ, and unfortunately, once you're in pain, your body's natural defenses causes your stress hormone levels to soar, which increases the likelihood of even more intense muscle tension and tooth grinding. This can create a vicious cycle of stress=jaw pain=stress=jaw pain - and well, you get the idea.

**So What Is Stress Anyway?**

Stress isn't always easy to define from person to person. What one person may handle splendidly makes another literally fall apart. The important thing to remember when evaluating your own personal stressors (the things in your life that create/cause stress) is that they can be *anything* that causes you to feel overwhelmed and out of control. It could be a one-time event like an upcoming wedding; or it could be the daily grind of working in an office where you don't seem to fit. Regardless of what is causing you to feel stressed, the important thing is to recognize what they are in order to help alleviate (or at least learn how to better handle) them.
Here are a few of the most common stressors researchers have found to be contributing factors in some people’s health - including the onset of TMJ. But remember, every patient is different and so are the factors which may be contributing to their symptoms. Just because your personal stressors aren’t listed here certainly doesn’t mean that they don’t exist - or aren’t adding to your TMJ pain.

- death of a spouse or child
- divorce
- marital separation
- incarceration
- death of a close family member or friend
- major injury or illness (personal)
- marriage
- loss of a job
- marital reconciliation
- retirement
- major health change in oneself or a family member
- pregnancy
- sexual difficulties
• getting a new family member (birth, marriage, adoption)
• moving
• new job/promotion
• changing careers
• purchasing a home
• taking on any debt greater than $10,000

How Can Stress Really Affect Me?

Convinced that stress can’t really hurt you? Think again! Every time your body experiences any level of stress it reacts by increasing your heart rate and blood pressure, dilating your blood vessels, and releasing chemicals and hormones within your central nervous system to help you prepare for battle. Experience ongoing or prolonged stress and your health begins to suffer. Here are just a few of the problems that ongoing stress can cause:

• A Weakening of the Immune System: Stress causes your body to release higher amounts of cortisol into your system, which may suppress your immune system. This can make you more
susceptible to upper respiratory problems; infectious diseases and common viruses.

- **Heart Disease**: Stress can cause your heart to work harder (and faster); your blood pressure to rise; and even your blood to clot more. These can all lead to a heart attack or stroke under certain conditions.

- **Asthma**: Stress brings on breathing attacks for those suffering with an asthmatic condition.

- **Stomach Problems**: One of the most commonly associated symptoms of stress are gastrointestinal problems. Ranging from indigestion and heartburn to irritable bowel syndrome, these are all conditions that can be triggered or worsened by stress.

- **TMJ**: Like other health problems induced by stress, TMJ can be exacerbated by prolonged stress and should be considered when treating TMJ pain.

**Did You Know?**

I bet you didn’t know these amazing facts about the affects of stress on your health:

* Nearly 40% of all doctor's visits are stress related
* American businesses alone pay out more than $150 billion a year in lost sick days due to stress.

* 100 million people every week take medication to relieve stress symptoms and diseases caused by stress.

* The less stress you have, the less likely you will get sick.

* Even devoting a small amount of time each day to stress relief will garner big results.

What Can I Do To Better Cope With Stress?

Stress is an inevitable part of life. The kids are always going to be beckoning you; there’s always going to be another project needing your attention; and the odds of someone cutting you off on the highway sometime during the day are pretty good. Getting rid of all of the stressors in your life simply isn’t an option: they’re here, and they're staying. The key to living a better life, despite the daily stress we all encounter is to learn to handle it better. Here are 6 basic strategies that you can use to better handle (and deal) with the things in your life that
gets your heart racing, your blood pressure rising and your TMJ pain escalating:

**Strategy #1: Figure Out What’s Really Important**

We all live crazy lives these days. Our schedules are crammed full, with even a daytimer unable to hold all of our appointments and responsibilities. Now we need Blackberries that remind us of meetings; school projects; upcoming deadlines; and even to go grocery shopping.

If you’ve ever felt like your life was spinning out of control at an unending pace, join the crowd. Married or single; professional or stay-at-home mom; parent or childless - it doesn’t matter. There’s not a single one of us who isn’t trying to fill every second of every day with something to do. Stop it! Yes, I said it - stop trying to fill those empty calendar pages. You really aren’t *that important* and the world won’t crumble around you if you don’t volunteer to bake cookies for the class party; or you only work 60 hours this week instead of 70. The fact is, most of us take on more than anyone really expects, and if they do - so what? They only want you to do it so they don't have to. Don’t let others guilt you into saying yes to taking on even more. Pick and choose your
activities and responsibilities with care. Sure, there’s stuff that has to be
done (like the laundry). But honestly, do the towels have to be steam
ironed?

One of the easiest ways to reduce your stress level is to decide which
tasks must be done and which ones can either wait for another day, or
be forgotten altogether. Now, I know that this is going to be hard for
some of you. I used to be one of those people who absolutely thought it
essential to mop the floor every single day. After all, my house is full of
kids and pets and the kitchen floor tends to get, shall I admit, a bit filthy?
But the fact of the matter is that a good sweeping and spot cleaning
those mud prints is all it really needs on a daily basis with a good
scrubbing every five days or so. Hey, it may not be the cleanest floor in
the cul de sac, but I’m a lot happier - and less stressed!

When prioritizing your own daily to-do list (whether at home or work),
separate it into three categories:

1. Essential Tasks

These are things that absolutely must be done. Just be sure to be
realistic about your timeline in accomplishing it!
2. Important Tasks

These are things that need to be worked in around your essential tasks but might have a more flexible schedule about it. For instance, you know you must shop for groceries for yourself and your family, but it doesn’t have to be done immediately. If you schedule properly, it can be fit into a more relaxed schedule other than a must-get-it-done-now one.

2. Optional Tasks

Optional tasks are those things that you’d like to get done, but won’t hurt anyone or anything if they are set aside for a little while. These can be added to your daily, weekly or monthly to-do list as time and energy permit.

The absolute key to prioritizing your daily tasks is to get as many items switched from your essential list to your optional one. This will help you better manage your time and your stress levels.
Strategy #2: See What Stresses You Most

Make a list of all of the things in your life that stress you out - even the little things! Next, divide them into two groups:

1. Things I Can Change.
2. Things I Can’t Change.

This will allow you to see what you can change (and work on it) and acknowledge what you can’t (like the death of a spouse), and begin to deal with it in a more constructive way.

Strategy #3: Get Organized!

I’m going to tell you a secret: I’m one of those annoying organized people. I keep lists of the things that I have to do; lists of things I want to do; lists for each of my family members; and even lists of unfulfilled dreams I don’t want to lose sight of. It drives my friends and family bats. A few years ago I decided to de-stress my life and throw out all of my lists. Sure, I didn’t feel much stress at first because I didn't know what needed to be done, so I did nothing. Then things started to fall apart. Permission slips were misplaced; bank deposits went unfilled; bills went unpaid; I even forgot to send my mother a birthday card! My
stress levels were soaring and my mouth was killing me! My TMJ was back and my life was a mess. Back came my lists.

Now, will keeping lists help you? Maybe. Maybe not. The point I’m trying to make is that finding your own form of organizing your time and your life can - and will - help you to remove quite a bit of stress (and TMJ pain) from your life.

Lighten up your load by following these simple tips:

- **Do all of your essential tasks while you still have energy. If you’re a morning person, do them right away in the morning; if you’re a late owl, do them at night)**

- **Pace yourself – always leave time for emergencies**

- **Prioritize your to-do list so you know what needs to be finished first (and what can wait)**

- **Identify the time-wasters in your life. Take a good look at your day and see what non-productive activities sap you of important time and energy that could be put to better use. Now, if sitting down with a hot cup of coffee and doing the daily crossword puzzle helps you de-stress then it isn’t a time waster. But, if you insist on reading the
paper from cover to cover even though you hate it, then find another way to keep up with what’s happening in the world.

**Strategy #4: Take a Few Clues from Your Body**

One of the most important things you can do to relieve stress - and your TMJ pain – is to listen to what your body is telling you. Are you feeling tired and overwhelmed? Does your jaw hurt? Do you have a headache? It’s time to deal with some issues or risk getting sicker - and in more pain.

**Strategy #5: Learn to Breathe**

Sure, we all must breathe every minute of every day in order to survive, but are we doing it correctly? When it comes to reducing stress, you must learn how to properly breathe - deeply of course. Learning a simple deep breathing exercise can help you better relax - a wonderful way to distress after a long day’s work (or even in the midst of a hectic work day).
Why does deep breathing work to reduce stress? According to one research study it:

- it helps your body get rid of waste gases
- it calms the nervous system
- it massages your internal organs
- it helps improve your focus
- it eases anxiety

The best way to get the full benefits of deep breathing is to practice this simple technique:

*Step #1: Lie on your back, keeping your legs extended and your arms comfortably at your sides.*

*Step #2: Place one arm on your chest; the other on your abdomen.*

*Step #3: Slowly inhale (through your nose).*

*Step #4: You should notice your hand on your stomach rising as you inhale (the one on your chest shouldn’t move).*

*Step #5: Now, exhale (slowly), first through your nose and then through your mouth.*
**Strategy #6: Get Some Sleep!**

The parents of any newborn will tell you that sleep is under-rated. Until you don’t get any, you have no idea how precious it really is. The problem is, most of us run on too little sleep without ever realizing it, which can increase our stress levels.

Without the right amount of sleep, our bodies never have the time to either relax or repair problems. When we sleep, every cell in our body works to replenish and repair itself. They can’t do it while you’re awake and running – they have other responsibilities then. This is what keeps us healthy and strong. Deprive your cells of this important rejuvenation time and you’re going to experience some serious consequences.

Even if you think missing an hour or two of sleep won’t hurt you, consider that those hours must be made up. If they’re not, your body won’t have the chance to take care of itself.
Sleep deprivation can be caused by a lot of things: stress & anxiety; insomnia; medication; and more. Whatever the cause it must be dealt with. Here are a few tips on getting a better night’s sleep:

1. Adopt an evening relaxation plan. Prepare your body for sleep by doing something relaxing.

2. Go to bed at the same time every night (and get up at the same time every morning. Don’t stay up late or sleep-in on weekends.

   That’ll just disrupt your sleep pattern.

3. Avoid Caffeine - especially from mid-afternoon on.

   Not only does caffeine inhibit the body’s ability to absorb magnesium, during a course of caffeine anaphylaxis, caffeine generates the "fight or flight response," and acts like amphetamine. It can negatively affect the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. This, in layman terms, disables muscle relaxation.

4. Avoid alcohol in the evenings.

5. Stay away from stimulating activities at least 2-3 hours before bed. (for some people this even means watching TV)


7. Change your attitude about sleep.
8. Avoid hard or bouncy pillows that may strain the neck.

9. Back sleepers should place a pillow under their knees.

10. Sleep on a firm, but not hard, mattress.

11. Use lumbar support (a rolled up towel will do).

12. Make sure your bedroom is a good sleeping temperature.

13. Do some deep breathing or other relaxation exercise during the first few minutes of lying in bed.

14. Consider including a short afternoon nap - this can help you from getting over-tired until nighttime.
Chapter Three: TMJ and Related Disorders

If you suffer from TMJ, the odds are you experience a variety of symptoms, which may or may not be caused by a related disorder. TMJ rarely appears alone. It usually accompanies some other medical condition or disorder. As we’ve already discussed in-depth, some people suffer from TMJ due to habitual habits that traumatize the muscles and joints; a lack of exercise or a poor diet. But, what if your TMJ appeared more suddenly? It may have been the result of an accident, injury or maybe even a long-term illness. Here are just a few that may be causing the onset of sudden TMJ symptoms.

Whiplash

Most people have heard of cervical whiplash of the neck, but few (even physicians) know about mandular whiplash (whiplash of the jaw). Unfortunately, this lack of knowledge may be the cause of an increasing number of TMJ diagnosis, due to the amount of people
who experience this type of jaw trauma following automobile accidents, only to discover that no one connects their pain to the accident until a full-blown case of TMJ is finally diagnosed.

Every year nearly 4 million people suffer from whiplash from automobile accidents alone. That doesn’t count the cases in which the cause of their injury was due to some other type of trauma like a sports injury; a fall or even a harsh sneeze. What’s even more amazing is the fact that as many as 97% of whiplash victims experience some degree of TMJ, or jaw pain within 6 months of their accident.

Whiplash occurs when the head and neck are thrust forward and then backward in a swift and forceful manner. Of course, every whiplash case is a little different, so the actual accident must be reviewed in order to figure out the actual injury and the best course of treatment. Some of the things that must be looked at include:

- the direction the driver was facing at impact
- his/her age
- the amount of warning (or tensing) they may have experienced
• the direction of the impact
• the vehicle’s speed

No one size fits all when it comes to whiplash victims. Every case is different and must be reviewed independently. But, there are some common denominator’s when it comes to whiplash and TMJ pain. Here are some of the most commonly reported symptoms of cervical and mandular whiplash that results in TMJ:

• headache
• neck pain or discomfort
• dizziness
• ear pain
• jaw pain
• eye pressure
• tearing
• problems hearing
• ringing in the ears (Tinnitus)
• fatigue
• nervousness
• numbness (especially in the fingers)
• muscle soreness and/or spasms
• stiff neck
• difficulty swallowing
• depression

Common Myths about Whiplash

All-too-often a patient goes to their doctor with excruciating pain following a mild to severe auto accident, thinking their symptoms are a direct result of the trauma only to be told it’s impossible. Why? Sadly, there are too many false assumptions (or myths) out there – even within the medical community – regarding the effects whiplash can have on the Temporomandibular Joint.

Here are a few of the most common for you to learn the truth about:

1. **Myth:** Whiplash injuries can not be sustained in very small accidents.

   **Fact:** It doesn’t matter how slight or severe the impact; whiplash injury can – and does – occur.
2. **Myth:** TMJ pain associated with whiplash must occur immediately.

**Fact:** TMJ Disorder symptoms can occur right away, or not for days, weeks, or in some cases, months following the initial trauma.

One study shows the sequence of events following an accident that may delay the onset of TMJ symptoms. Here is what the study revealed:

Step #1: A whiplash injury occurs causing spasms in the muscles of the back of the neck.

Step #2: The muscles of the back of the neck contract as the head moves lightly backward and forward.

Step #3: The nerve cells in the neck alert the brain of trouble.

Step #4: The brain tells the neck to correct the neck posture.

Step #5: To compensate, the head moves forward, creating further tension in the neck and lower jaw.

Step #6: The tension in the front neck muscles pull the lower jaw down and back, creating a misalignment of the teeth.

Step #7: Now the jaw tells the brain that the bite is off.

Step #8: The brain tells the muscles in the jaw to correct the problem, increasing the tension already in the jaw muscles.
Step #9: This increase in tension causes the jaw muscles to begin to spasm, creating stress in the temporomandibular joint.

Step #10: This causes TMJ Disorder.

Step #11: The pain gets worse.

Step #12: This causes increased spasms in the jaw.

Step #13: The spasms cause more pain... and on and on and on...

Myth: Your TMJ pain can’t be caused by whiplash because the cervical collar being worn would have relieved it.

Fact: Wearing a cervical collar can actually increase TMJ pain.

**The Role Splints May Be Playing in Your TMJ**

There are many different kinds of splints used for TMJ treatment. Some work better than others, some don’t really work at all, and some - if improperly balanced - can cause even more damage to the user. That’s why it’s important to understand what splints are, and what they can do for you, before you get for fitted one. Luckily, you have this guide to walk you through the basics of oral splints.
What Are Splints?

Splints are nothing more than a removable plastic bite-plate that is individually fitted over either all of the teeth or just the lower backs in order to help realign your jaw and/or keep you from clenching/grinding your teeth (especially at night while you sleep). Regardless of the style of splint you and your dentist decide to use in your treatment your splint should:

- help alleviate much of the pain you’re feeling
- allow your jaw joint to heal
- help you break the habit of clenching
- give your back teeth the freedom to move in a more natural and comfortable position

Who’s a Good Candidate for a Splint?

The vast majority of TMJ patients suffer from myofascial pain and are not good candidates for splints. However, those who have experienced
any sort of trauma or internal derangement where the discs between the place where the upper and lower jaw connect become displaced may be treated with a splint.

**How Splints Work**

No splint can work if not fitted properly. Unless the jaw is positioned comfortably within the splint no real healing can occur, so be sure that the splint does not hold the jaw in a tense or awkward position.

One of the best designs for TMJ splint treatment is the mandibular orthopedic appliance (otherwise known as MORA). The reason it works so well for so many patients is the fact that it only covers the lower back teeth. This allows the second molars to erupt, which gives the condyle the opportunity to move downward and forward, leaving room for the disc to go back to where it should naturally be.

Some of the advantages its designer cites for using the MORA device include:

- its quick to make and easy to adjust
• it offers patient comfort for short periods of time
• it gets rid of jaw clicks while worn
• the procedure is reversible
• it can be discontinued if not effective

Once a splint has been effectively fitted, treatment of the Temporomandibular joint can begin. Used in conjunction with the proper exercises and habit modifications, your TMJ pain will begin to dissipate while the condyles learn how to function properly once again.

In the event your dentist recommends another type of device other than the MORA, don’t worry. As long as you feel progress, your new splint (no matter what the style) is working.
**Fibromyalgia and TMJ Disorders**

One thing is certain: fibromyalgia and TMJ pain are connected. How or why no one is completely sure yet, but researchers do know that 75% of fibromyalgia patients also experience TMJ pain; while 18% of TMJ patients eventually develop fibromyalgia. These statistics make it essential for both patient and doctor to better understand the connections between the two disorders.

**What is Fibromyalgia?**

The first step to understanding the association between fibromyalgia and TMJ is to better understand what each disorder is. Since we’ve already discussed what TMJ is - and what causes it - let’s turn our attention next to Fibromyalgia.

Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) is a debilitating disease that causes mild to severe pain in virtually every area of the body. Eventually the discomfort becomes debilitating for most. Affecting every patient
differently, fibromyalgia is a type of rheumatic disorder that can affect the muscles, tendons, joints, bones and nerves.

**What Causes Fibromyalgia?**

While there are no definitive causes reported in the diagnosis of fibromyalgia, most research indicates a strong link between some sort of injury, trauma or infection of the central nervous system just prior to the onset of symptoms.

Symptoms can range from person to person, making diagnosing the disease very difficult. As a matter of fact, fibromyalgia isn’t usually considered until all other disorders have been ruled out. Some of the most common symptoms shared by Fibromyalgia patients include:

- motor or coordination problems
- irritable bowel/bladder syndromes
- rapid heartbeat
- headaches (mild to severe)
- sensitivity to smells, sounds, lights and vibrations
- an intolerance to the cold
• widespread achiness or pain
• restless leg syndrome
• overall stiffness (especially in the morning)
• non-refreshing sleep and/or insomnia
• numbness and tingling extremities
• feelings of weakness
• forgetfulness/mental confusion

**Diagnosing Fibromyalgia Disorder**

Most physicians diagnose Fibromyalgia by looking to see if a patient experiences tenderness along 11 of the 18 most common FMS tender points (trigger points that do not refer pain to other parts of the body), spread over the body’s four quadrants.

The trigger points that are reviewed include:

• points along the spine in the neck where the head and chest meet
• on the upper side of the shoulder (about halfway between the shoulder and the neck)
• on the back, close to the dimples of the buttocks
• below the buttocks, near the outside edge of the thigh
• on the neck, near the inner edge of the collarbone
• on the neck about four fingers down from the last point
• on the inner palm side of the lower arm (about an inch below the elbow crease)
• in the fat pad of the knee (on its inner side)

The Differences (and Similarities) Between TMJ and Fibromyalgia

With so many overlapping symptoms, and a connection between the two diseases it can sometimes be difficult to tell them apart (especially if you suffer from both). To help make things easier, here’s a comparison of the two:

TMJ Disorder:

• Generally affects more women than men
• Decreases with age
• Causes mild to severe (but chronic) pain
• Seems to cause FMS is about 18% of sufferers
• Affects both the body’s nerves and the muscles
• Features referred pain from myofascial trigger points in the head, neck and shoulder
• Features specific pain in specific areas/regions of the body

**Fibromyalgia Disorder:**

• Features chronic pain
• Affects more women than men
• Increases with age
• Is found in 75% of TMJ patients
• Creates a chemical imbalance within the body
• Creates widespread pain throughout at least 11 of the body’s 18 pain points
• Causes body-wide achiness

**Both Disorders Feature:**

Some symptoms common to both disorders include:

• fatigue
• shortness of breath
• headaches
• knee, leg and foot pain
• numbness of fingers
• osteoarthritis
• anxiety
• depression
• eye pain
• earaches
• toothaches
• hearing problems
• dizziness or vertigo
• ear ringing

*TMJ symptoms not found in FMS patients include: clicking, snapping or popping of the jaw joint; jaw locking; pain in the lower jaw; an inability to fully open or stretch the mouth and clenching.*
Chapter Four: Therapies to Consider in Treating Your TMJ

In a quest to find relief from their TMJ pain, many patients have turned to other therapies for help. In this chapter we will discuss some of the most common (and helpful) therapies TMJ patients have found to offer successful treatment:

Physical Therapy

Physical therapy is an integral part of any TMJ treatment plan. Since TMJ is an all-body problem, and not just a jaw issue, it is important to treat the whole body for best results. This may include one or more of the following physical therapy options:

- the use of ice to reduce inflammation
- Myofascial Release - to release trigger points in any affected muscles
• Joint mobilization exercises
• Pulsed Ultrasound Therapy
• Electrical Stimulation
• Ionphoresis – electrical stimulation combined with deep heat
• Heat to release muscle spasms
• Massage
• Ultrasound
• Individual Muscle Exercises
• Counseling
• Stabilization Exercises to promote strength and flexibility
• Posture Therapy
• Deep Breathing
• Relaxation/Stress Relief

Myofascial Release

Anything that affects the fascia, or the web-like connective tissue throughout the body can cause a build-up of pressure on the nerves, muscles, bones and internal organs. With almost 200 pounds per
square inch of pressure being exerted on these important body parts, it’s no wonder excruciating pain results. Only Myofascial Release can relieve that pressure.

What is Myofascial Release?
An extremely mild form of stretching, myofascial release is a hands on way to evaluate and treat the body structure by putting specialized pressure on the point where a fascial restriction is occurring.

Myotherapy
A combination of Myofascial Release, massage and exercises aimed at relieving pain and increasing range of motion, Myotherapy involves locating trigger points causing your discomfort and deactivating them.

For a complete guide to this unique therapy option, check out Pain Eraser, written by Bonnie Prudden.
**Chiropractics**

Chiropractics are a type of therapy that relies on the assumption that disease is a result of the abnormal function of the nervous system. By manipulating and adjusting spinal misalignments it is believed that irritating nerves will stop sending pain signals to the brain. This can be extremely beneficial to patients suffering from myofascial trigger point pain.

**Gentle Yoga**

A preferred therapy amongst many TMJ sufferers, yoga is a great way to keep joints flexible and muscles and tendons stretched thoroughly in order to alleviate pain. As in any type of treatment, be sure to find a qualified yoga instructor who is experienced in dealing with TMJ patients for best results.
Biofeedback

Biofeedback is a great way to discover your individual TMJ triggers, while learning important relaxation techniques. When using this technique, the patient is hooked up to an electronic monitoring device that measures their blood pressure, heart rate and jaw tensions in an attempt to show them how best to relax in order to relieve their TMJ pain.

Podiatry

Who knew that a malfunction in your foot could cause your jaw to ache? Well, it can! Many TMJ Disorders have been directly linked to functional hallux limitus (FHL), a foot problem that causes the hinge joint between the toe and the ball of the foot to fail, which inhibits the foot from flexing at the right point when a step is taken. When this happens, the gait is disrupted which can cause a variety of painful symptoms - including severe pain in your jaw!
Now that we’ve discussed every possible cause of your TMJ disorder (starting from the top of your head and moving down to your feet), I hope you can now better understand why it is so important to take care of your entire body if you want to treat - and ultimately - cure your TMJ. Remember, TMJ isn’t just a jaw problem - it’s a whole body problem that needs treatment from your head to your toes.
Appendix I: Glossary

**Acute Pain** - sharp and severe

**Atrophy** - a decrease in a body organ due to a lack of use

**Bruxism** - teeth grinding while clenching

**Chronic** - a long-standing condition, disease or symptom

**Condyle** - the rounded top of the lower jaw bone

**Disc** - soft tissue lying between the condyle and the temporal bone

(found in front of the ear bones)

**Degenerative Joint Disease** - a chronic degeneration of the joint’s cartilage

**Dysfunctional** - impaired functioning

**Fascia** - a sheet of connective tissue found running through the entire body

**Ligaments** - dense bands of tissue that connect bones together

**Lordosis** - the natural curvature of the spine

**Malocclusion** - an inability for the upper and lower teeth to make proper contact when the jaw is closed
Mandible - the lower jaw

Myalgia - muscular pain

Passive Stretching - a very gentle and slow stretching of the body's muscles and ligaments

Referred Pain - pain that is felt in one place on the body, but originates from another

Splint - a removable device used by dentists to alleviate jaw pain and realign the jaw

Tender Points - spots on the body which cause pain when touched

Vertigo - extreme dizziness
Appendix II: Recommended Links

The TMJ Association
www.tmj.org

The National Library of Medicine
www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/TMJ

TMJ Dentists
www.tmj-dentist-directory.com

Fibromyalgia Recovery Network
www.fibrohelp.net

Fibromyalgia Self-Help
www.cfidsselfhelp.org