



## Temporomandibular Disorder: Home Care Instructions

- Put a warm, moist cloth or heating pad set on low on your jaw. Do this for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the heating pad and your skin.
- Avoid sleeping with pressure on your jaw. Back sleeping is the best sleeping position to enable your jaw to relax. A small pillow to support the neck curvature and elevation of the knees with pillows may be helpful.
- Avoid hard or chewy foods that cause your jaws to work very hard. Examples include popcorn, jerky, tough meats, chewy breads, gum, and raw apples and carrots.
- Choose softer foods that are easy to chew. These include eggs, yogurt, and soup.
- Cut your food into small pieces. Chew slowly.
- Limit the intake of sugar and caffeine, as both are stimulants to the nervous system.
- If your jaw gets too painful to chew, or if it locks, you may need to puree your food for a few days or weeks.
- To relax your jaw, repeat this exercise for a few minutes every morning and evening. Watch yourself in a mirror. Gently open and close your mouth. Move your jaw straight up and down. But don't do this if it makes your pain worse.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week to relieve stress. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.
- Do not:
  - Hold a phone between your shoulder and your jaw.
  - Open your mouth all the way, like when you sing loudly or yawn.
  - Clench or grind your teeth, bite your lips, or chew your fingernails.
  - Clench things such as pens, pipes, or cigars between your teeth.