



Signs of TMD/TMJ and What To Do Next

Concerned that you might have TMD (TMJ)? Learn more here.

What is TMD/TMJ?

The temporomandibular (tem-puh-roh-man-DIB-yuh-ler) joint is a hinge joint that attaches the lower jaw to the skull. When there are problems with this joint, the jaw, and the muscles in the face that control the jaw, this is known as Temporomandibular Joint Disorder, or TMD/TMJ.

What Causes TMD/TMJ?

The cause of TMD/TMJ can vary from person to person, and in some cases, may not even be clear. The most common causes of TMD/TMJ, however, tend to be:

- Excessive strain on the jaw/joint/muscles due to tooth clenching or grinding
- Trauma to the head, neck, or jaw
- Arthritis in or displacement of the joint disks

Some medical conditions, like fibromyalgia or irritable bowel syndrome, can also worsen the symptoms experienced from TMD/TMJ.

What Are the Symptoms of TMD/TMJ?

TMD/TMJ isn't always permanent, and may only be temporary in some cases. Some signs that you may have TMD/TMJ could be:

- Discomfort, pain, or soreness in the jaw
- Change in jaw alignment
- Restricted movement of the mouth/jaw
- Headaches and earaches (not caused by infection)
- Pain that spreads from the jaw to the face, shoulder, neck, or eyes
- Crunching, clicking, popping, or locking of the jaw when opening or closing the mouth.

What to Do If You Think You Have TMD/TMJ

If you believe you may have TMD/TMJ, make sure to address it with your dentist. They may have some suggestions to reduce the pain (like medicine, cold packs, or behavior changes), recommendations on treatment (like a mouthguard), or may provide a referral to a specialist (like an Oral/Facial Pain clinic or Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon) to determine which treatment would work best for you to address your TMD/TMJ.



TMD/TMJ and Insurance

Though it is most common for your dentist to identify and sometimes diagnose TMD/TMJ, treatment for this disorder will generally fall under your health insurance, rather than dental insurance. TMD/TMJ is, after all, a disorder of the jaw bone/joint and facial muscles, rather than the actual teeth.

Before pursuing treatment for TMJ/TMD, make sure to check with your dental and medical insurance to confirm that the services will be covered.



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