

Jaw Problems (TMD): What You Need to Know

Sometimes, people have problems with their jaw or the muscles around it. These are called Temporomandibular Disorders (TMD). About 1 in 15 people in the UK, mostly between 20-40 years old, have TMD. It can make your face hurt, or your jaw hurt, click, or feel stiff. Most of the time, it's not serious, and the pain goes away after a while.

What Causes TMD?

There's no single reason why people get TMD. Some common factors are stress, habits like teeth grinding, and not sleeping well. Chewing gum a lot or clenching your jaw can make it worse. Even things like too much caffeine or smoking can add to the problem.

How Can You Feel Better?

You can do many simple things at home to help with TMD. These include:

- **Rest Your Jaw:** Keep your teeth apart when you're not eating, and don't clench your jaw.
- **Avoid Certain Habits:** Don't chew gum or bite your nails, as this can make your jaw tired and your pain worse.
- **Eat Soft Foods:** If your jaw hurts, eat soft foods like pasta or mashed potatoes. As you feel better, slowly eat harder foods again.
- **Cut Down on Caffeine and Smoking:** These can make your pain worse.
- **Relax and Breathe:** Do slow breathing exercises to help your muscles relax.

Easy Exercises

Try gentle jaw exercises to make your muscles stronger and more relaxed. You can also use warm or cold packs to help with pain.

Other Treatments

If your TMD doesn't get better with self-care, there are other options:

- **Physiotherapy:** A physiotherapist can teach you exercises to improve your jaw movement.
- **Mouthguards:** These can help provide some relief to the sore jaw and or muscles whilst sleeping. They are add-on treatments to self-care, which is the most important first step.
- **Counselling:** Talking to someone might help if stress or your mood/anxiety is affecting you.
- **Medicine:** Painkillers can be used for a short time (less than 5 days) if needed.

When to See a Doctor

If your jaw pain doesn't get better, or if you feel really stressed, it's a good idea to talk to a doctor or dentist. They can help with more treatments if needed.

Summary:

Most people with TMD feel better after a few weeks of simple care. Relax, avoid certain habits, and give your jaw a bit of a break to help it feel better.

Embed videos within here:

TMD explanation – <https://youtu.be/zxo7dWO6Uas?si=gjylik-a6ae-IMGR>

Self-management explanation - <https://youtu.be/xyLZhxytjFw?si=uwxAzg86aB8b367B>