

TEMPOROMANDIBULAR JOINT SYNDROME (TMJ)

The temporomandibular (jaw) joint can become inflamed for many reasons. Once inflamed it can produce pain in the ear or jaw, headache, cracking or popping in the ear or jaw joint, jaw muscle spasm, ringing in the ear and pressure or fullness in the ear among other symptoms.

Approximately 95% of persons who suffer from TMJ syndrome can find relief from medical therapy only, meaning they never require surgery. The initial medical management regimen is described below:

- 1) Eat a soft diet. Avoid gum, salads, tough breads, chops, steaks and other meats requiring prolonged chewing. In general, try to put the jaw joint at rest. Try to include foods like mashed potatoes, yogurt, pudding, well-cooked vegetables and fish instead.
- 2) Aspirin, if you tolerate aspirin well, take two (2) regular aspirin tablets (325 milligrams each) 3 or 4 times per day for 7 –10 days. You may substitute slow-release or enteric-coated tablet instead, as long as the milligram dosage is the same. If you do not tolerate aspirin well, then you may try an ibuprofen product like Motrin or Advil or a naproxen sodium product like Aleve. Follow the manufacturer’s dosing instructions on the label of your product of choice to ensure proper pain relief.
- 3) Use a heating pad or hot water bottle on the ear and jaw area for 15-20 minutes 3-4 times per day.