

## **Dental Self-Care: Jaw Joint Problems**

(Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction Syndrome)

Your success in treating your jaw joint problem will depend, in large part, upon the way you treat these injured areas.

1. Try to sleep on your back. If you must sleep on your side, ensure adequate pillow support between your shoulder and head. Do not sleep on your jaw.
2. For the next few months, be sure to cut all foods into small, bite-sized pieces and try to avoid opening your mouth any wider than the thickness of your thumb.
3. Do not eat hard crusts of bread, tough meat, raw vegetables, or any food that requires prolonged chewing. Avoid using chewing gum during this period of treatment.
4. Do not bite any food with your front teeth.
5. Avoid protruding your jaw during any other activities. For example, smoking, or in conversation. If you wear lipstick, do not bring your jaw forward when applying it.
6. Make every effort not to strain your joint ligaments unnecessarily.
7. Should you find yourself clenching your teeth together, try to remember to keep your lips together, your teeth lightly together and the tongue in contact with the roof of the mouth (palate).
8. Try to breathe through your nose at all times and to hold your head upright and shoulders back.
9. Realise that jaw/muscle problems are psychophysiological in nature, meaning related to stress plus injury or abnormality. Reduction of internal tension and external stress in your life will be of great benefit.

**These few simple rules can easily allow you to modify your lifestyle and eating habits and to avoid those jaw movements that might re-injure your joints, muscles or ligaments.**

Yours sincerely  
Dr John Flutter  
**Dental Surgeon**