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Providing effective relief from facial pain for over three decades

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What you Need to Know to Feel Better:

Jaw Disorders (TMJ)

If the temporomandibular joints and/or the muscles/tendons of your jaw and neck have been identified as a source of your current pains and /or mechanical problems (unable to open your mouth, joint noises, limited ability to turn your head), it is likely that your problem is **ORTHOPEDIC IN NATURE** (Like problems in your knees or elbows).

It is therefore important to realize that healing will take time and is dependent on making sure that:

- The injured muscles, ligaments, tendons and bones are rested and used less on a daily basis.
- Adequate protection/stabilization of the injured tissues is achieved (often using oral appliances)
- Sufficient rehabilitation efforts are implemented, including home exercise, home massage, physical therapy and muscle trigger point therapy
- Supportive therapies, such as diet and behavior modification, medications and breathing/relaxation techniques are continued as long as necessary.
- **Never force open a locked jaw!**
- **Always- Chew to comfort , if it hurts , avoid it!**

Behaviors to Avoid	Foods to Avoid	Postures/Situations to Avoid
Tooth Contact...resting the teeth together. Remember LIPS TOGETHER TEETH APART	Bagels	Don't study or do work on the couch or bed
Clenching of teeth.... Avoid making a fist in your face Bracing your jaw muscles or jutting jaw forward.	Hard, crusty breads	Hours in front of computer w/o a break (change position of screen if able, take 5 min. break every hour)
Shifting of jaw from side to side	Hard pretzels (sourdough)	Laptops (don't use while sitting on bed, laying on floor)
Frequent wide yawns Place tongue on roof of mouth behind front teeth to limit opening	Raw vegetables...	Heavy backpacks Phone cradling
Lying on bed with chin in hands	Large sandwiches –hero's	
Leaning chin into hands while at your desk	Tough meats Corn on the cob	Check with Dr. Lark before getting your teeth cleaned or visiting your

		dentist to have work done
Pen/pencil biting.... and/or holding pens between your teeth	Thick pizza crust	
Cuticle/nail /lip/cheek/tongue biting	Gum	
Hair /garment biting	Popcorn	
Straw chewing	Chewy candy	
Ice chewing	Apple biting, pieces are fine	
Biting on eyeglasses, keys, needles or thread	Dried fruit/nuts	

Teeth Apart....they should never touch!

Your teeth must NOT be in constant contact on a regular basis during the day. If you identify this as problematic, there are a number of behavior modification techniques that may be helpful to change this repetitive, potentially pain producing acquired behavior.

- Think of the concept “lips together, teeth apart” and/or keep the teeth apart with the lips separated, if this is more comfortable. “Catching flies posture”
- Use reminder stickers in target locations so that, when seen, you are reminded to drop the jaw and determine whether you are tensing your jaw muscles, raising your shoulders, crossing your arms or furrowing your brow. All of these postures will fatigue muscles.
- Say or think “m” words such as “amen”, “emma”, or just “m”.
 - o Saying/thinking these words will help drop the jaw.
- With your lips lightly touching and your tongue either gently placed against the inside of your lower/upper front teeth or just floating in no particular position, breath in through your nose, fill your diaphragm (belly), then expel the air through your lips.
 - o Repeat this 6 times when a reminder sticker is seen.

ONCE YOUR TEETH ARE APART, YOU ARE NO LONGER MAKING A FIST IN YOUR FACE AND THE MUSCLES WILL GET THEIR FULL BLOOD SUPPLY CARRYING OXYGEN AND NUTRIENTS. HEALING CAN NOW OCCUR.

Relaxation Techniques and Breathing

During the day, most people with ongoing pain breath **TOO QUICKLY** and as a result upset the balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide in their bodies. **THIS WILL SET YOUR MUSCLES UP FOR FATIGUE AND PAIN!!!!!!!** In order to slow your breathing (as most of us take too many breaths per minute) the following technique is worth practicing.

Once every hour, devote one minute to this technique: With your lips lightly touching and your tongue either gently placed against your lower/upper front teeth or just floating in no particular position, breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds filling your belly, exhale through your lips or nose for 4 seconds and then pause for 2 seconds. This 10 second cycle should be repeated 6 times.

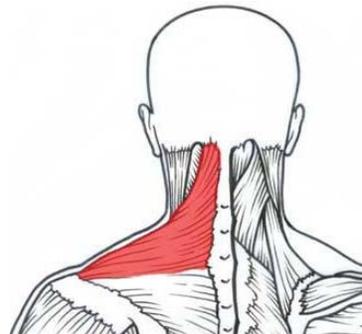
Try this breathing technique before you get into bed at night. Do not attempt to fall asleep if you have just done paperwork or other mentally stimulating activities.

You may wish to purchase a yoga mat, relaxation tape, and a candle, and fifteen minutes before going to bed, practice breathing and relaxation techniques.

Although a glass of wine may seem like a good idea, alcohol can create slight arousals during the sleeping hours, promoting restless sleep and additional grinding and clenching of teeth.

Gentle Muscle Massage/Exercise/Home Remedies

Sore muscles indicate that muscle health has been compromised. Usually the muscle soreness is the end result of irritating substances like lactic acid accumulating due to muscle fatigue and tightness. In order to promote blood flow to your sore muscles which will bring fresh oxygen and nutrients the following massage techniques are helpful. They can be repeated 3-4 times during the day, in 30- 60 second blocks of time. The two most important muscles to massage are the temporalis and the masseter. Take your index and middle fingers and in a circular motion massage the sore areas of these muscles. Don't bring tears to your eyes but make sure you pressing hard enough to get the desired results. Perform the massage with your mouth hanging slightly open, and the head relaxed. Inside the mouth there are muscles as well that could benefit from gentle massage. Dr. Lark will review these techniques with you.



One jaw exercise is particularly helpful. It is designed to release tension in the jaw closing/clenching muscles. Place your tongue as far back on the roof of your mouth as possible. Try to open your mouth keeping the tongue in this position. (Jaw opening will be very limited) Now, place your thumb under your chin, and attempt to open your mouth against the resistance of your thumb. Maintain this resistance for 3 seconds and repeat 6 times. This resistance is making the jaw opening muscles work harder, releasing tension at the same time from the clenching muscles. Repeat 6 times/day.

PRIOR TO GOING TO BED, MASSAGING THESE MUSCLES AND PERFORMING THIS EXERCISE MAY ALSO BE HELPFUL...

Ice and/or heat can both be helpful. Ice can decrease inflammation and is most helpful when placed over a painful jaw joint. Ice is best applied by wrapping a small soft freezer pack in a moist kitchen towel and placing it directly over the joint. Leave in place no longer than 2 minutes and switch to the opposite side if indicated. Repeat 3-4 times a day. Another option is to use the ice when taking a shower. Ice is best applied in this situation by filling a wax paper cup with water, freezing it, and then ripping the top layer of wax off, creating a popsicle of ice. Again apply for no longer than 2 minutes.

For sore and painful muscles, most patients prefer heat. Heat can be kept in place for 15-20 minutes. Repeat 3 times a day. Obtain a microwaveable heat pack and cover with a terrycloth wrap. Another option is an electric heating unit (sunbeam makes a number of options).

You can also consider using over the counter preparations like Bio-Freeze, Aspercreme, Ben-Gay or other topical creams being careful to not get the gels near your eyes as the menthol which is present in many of these preparations will burn. Daytime use and at bedtime is encouraged.

Sleep Suggestions...for those patients with trouble falling asleep

- Take 1 mg of synthetic (not natural or organic) melatonin (pure melatonin), 4 hours before bedtime nightly. If it makes you groggy, move it closer to bedtime.
- Shut down 30-60 minutes before bedtime. Sit in a dim lit room, read a book, listen to relaxing music, or meditate.
- Try to go to bed at the same time each night with the goal of 7-8 hours.
- If difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, get out of bed, read until sleepy, then go back to bed.
- While in bed, try deep breathing as follows
 - a. Take slow deep breaths using your stomach muscles. Relax your body, face, shoulders, arms..
 - b. Each time you let the air out, at the end of the breath, count a number.
The count should go down after each breath
Breath in, breath out say 40
Breath in , breath out say 39 etc...
- Wake up same time every day if possible, and get out of bed!!!!
- Get bright light exposure shortly after waking up (20 minutes), using Phillips go lite, or sunlight 365
- Bed is only for sleep and intimacy
- Avoid all napping
- Avoid exercise within four hours of bedtime
- Try to have 3 evenly spaced meals each day

-Avoid caffeine after 4 pm

Sleep Apnea Patients

-Use Sleep Apnea Appliance as directed,

-Be sure to do morning bite exercises every day and immediately report changes in your bite

-Decongestants and breathe-right strips may enhance nasal airway during times of nasal stuffiness

-Follow the recommendations of your pulmonary sleep physician, use c-Pap/ bi-Pap to supplement appliance when directed

Common Medications Prescribed

Advil (ibuprofen), Aleve (Naproxen), Lodine (Etodolac), Relafen (Nabumetone), Mobic(meloxicam) are common anti-inflammatory medications prescribed by Dr. Lark. They should be taken with meals and at least 12 oz. of water. These medications must be taken as scheduled and not on a need basis. Discontinue if gastric upset occurs and call the office.

Transdermal topical pain formulas may be suggested. Topical anti-inflammatories like Flector patches, voltaren 1% gel is often recommended, and can be used 3x/day. Neuropathic transdermal formulas are to be used as directed, discontinue if adverse reactions occur.

Flexeril (cyclobenzaprine), Zanaflex (tizanidine), and Baclofen (lioresal) are common muscle relaxants prescribed by Dr. Lark. Take as prescribed during the day or at bedtime. Expect some drowsiness, but discontinue if dizzy and off balance.

Tramadol 50 mg. (ultram) is a pain medication. To be taken no more than twice /day

Neurontin and Lyrica are medications used for neuropathic pain problems to regulate nerve based Orofacial pain. Expect some drowsiness, but discontinue if dizzy and off balance.

Valium (diazepam), Klonopin (clonazepam), Xanax (alprazolam)) are anti-anxiety medications that help ease muscle pain/tightness and can improve the quality of your sleep for a short period of time. Most patients think they are muscle relaxants as they help ease muscle based symptoms. Over time physical dependence to these medications can develop so coming off of them should be a slow pre-determined process.

Pamelor (nortriptyline), doxepin (sinequan) at low doses are used to improve sleep and reduce persistent pain by building endorphins, our happy chemicals

You must notify your physician of recommended medications prior to use and inform our office if placed on any new medications by your physician or self-administered over the counter medications used. Avoid alcohol or recreational drug, these can be dangerous when used with the listed medications.