

Stillwater Family Dental  
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PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR TEMPOROMANDIBULAR DISORDERS (TMD)

1. **What?** This disorder of the joints between the upper and lower jaws can be caused by accidents, surgery, developmental defects, peculiar oral habits, extensive dental restorations (fillings), naturally occurring malocclusion (poor bite), orthodontics, psychological stress, clenching or grinding of teeth, or other conditions.
2. **Why?** This therapy can help your jaw joints to function freely and without pain. If you follow the treatment below, you can relax your chewing muscles, reduce severe headaches, and prevent related discomfort. This therapy has approximately an 80 percent success rate for patients with TMD. If physical therapy is unsuccessful, additional treatment is available.
3. **When?** For best results, do these exercises once per day, unless directed otherwise. The procedure requires 15 minutes. Choose a relaxed time of the day when you will be able to do the exercises without interruption, such as immediately before bedtime. You may also want to use a timer.
4. **How?**
  - a. **Heat:** Hold a heating pad, hot washcloth, hot-water bottle, or other heat source to the painful areas of your head or neck. Apply this heat for *five* minutes to relax your muscles for the exercises.
  - b. **Exercises:** Do the following for one minute each (a total of 5 minutes).
    - *Open-Close:* Place a closed fist under your chin to resist movement gently. Open and close your mouth 30 times (one second to open and one second to close).
    - *Forward-Backward:* Place a closed fist on the front of your chin to resist movement gently. Move your lower jaw forward and backward 30 times (one second forward and one second backward).
    - *Right:* Place a closed fist on the right side of your chin to resist movement gently. Move your jaw to the right and then return your jaw to a relaxed position 30 times (One second right and one second to chewing position).
    - *Left:* Place a closed fist to the left side of your chin to resist movement gently. Move your jaw to the left and then return your jaw to a relaxed position 30 times (One second left and one second to chewing position).
    - Head Turn: (Stand or sit very straight, 15 times each side):
    - *Right:* Turn your head all the way to the right, and place the palm of your hand on the left side of your jaw. Every two seconds, push your head slightly farther to the right, and then return your head to the original side position.
    - *Left:* Turn your head all the way to the left, and place the palm of your hand on the right side of your jaw. Every two seconds, push your head slightly farther to the left, and then return your head to the original side position.
  - c. **Heat:** Apply heat for another five minutes as in the first step to relax your muscles.
5. **Future Treatment?** Further treatment, such as a plastic bite splint to assist in making you bite in the correct position or slightly trimming of teeth and fillings to make your teeth and jaws come together correctly (occlusal equilibration) may be needed to assist in your therapy.
6. **Questions?** Please contact us with any questions or concerns.