

## **Instructions for Patients with Temporomandibular Disorders (TMD)**

The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) and surrounding muscles of mastication can develop pain and discomfort, classified as temporomandibular disorder. TMJ pain is often caused by a combination of factors including genetics, injury, arthritis, muscular myalgia and clenching. Many people clench their teeth without developing jaw pain, however many people who have jaw pain do clench their teeth. Success in treating your temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorder or associated muscular symptoms depends largely upon the way you treat the involved areas with your home care. Following the instructions below will help you to manage your symptoms and aid the healing process. Many times, TMD symptoms persist off and on throughout life and increase during periods of high stress. Night guards are essential in treating long term TMJ discomfort, clenching and grinding.

### **Medications:**

- Take Aleve (naproxen sodium) every 12 hours as needed, according to the instructions on the bottle
  - Aleve works better for muscle pain than ibuprofen
  - Do not take Aleve with other NSAIDS (such as ibuprofen)
- If prescribed meloxicam, take meloxicam INSTEAD of Aleve
  - Take with food to avoid stomach upset

### **Home Care:**

- Use a warm compress on one side of the joint and a cold compress on the other side for 5 minutes
  - Switch sides
  - Repeat for 30 minutes every day while symptoms last
- Wear your night guard every night
  - You can also wear your night guard while watching tv, studying, driving, etc.
  - do NOT wear more than 15 hours a day
- Gently massage your jaw muscles to help them relax
- Maintain good posture- your head, neck, and jaw muscles are closely and intricately connected

### **Do's**

- Cut your food into small, bite-size pieces to prevent opening your jaw wide
- Eat a soft diet, avoiding crunchy and chewy foods
- Keep your lips together but your teeth apart
- Take note of your symptoms--do you have increased symptoms after working out, studying/working at a desk, driving?
- Maintain good posture
- Rest your tongue against the roof of your mouth for greatest relaxation of your jaw muscles
- Wear your night guard every night

### **Don'ts**

- Do not chew gum!
- Do not eat foods that require prolonged chewing (bagels, tough meats or popcorn)
- Do not eat hard "crunchy" foods (peanuts, raw vegetables, chips)
- Do not move your jaw so that it causes the joint to make a clicking, popping or grinding sound
- Do not bite your fingernails, chew on pencils or pens, bite your cheeks or lips, etc.
- Do not rest your jaw on your hand
- Do not clench or grind your teeth, if you find yourself clenching try to relax the muscles and keep your teeth slightly apart