

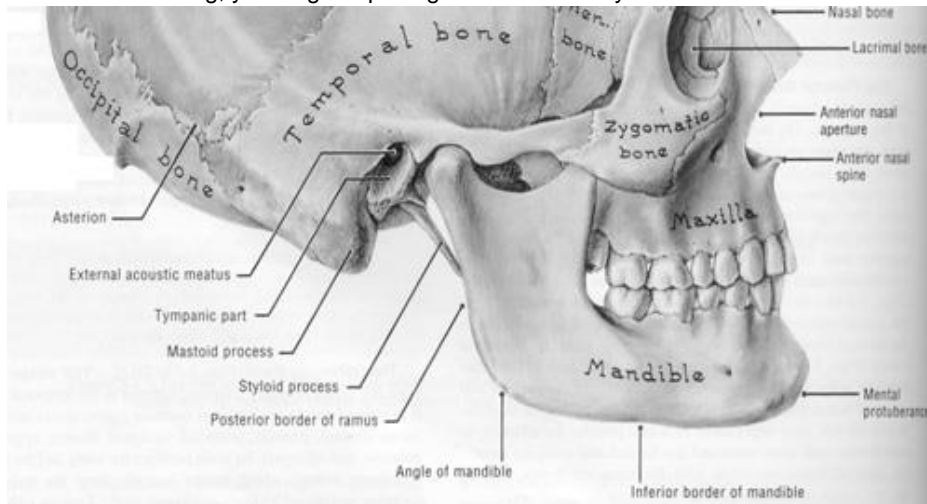


TEMPOROMANDIBULAR JOINT DYSFUNCTION

Many people suffer from temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders without realising that this is the source of their pain. Varied symptoms such as earaches, headaches and face and neck pain may be a result of temporomandibular dysfunction.

Other common symptoms which characterise the problem include:-

1. Pain on chewing, yawning or opening the mouth widely.



2. Clicking noises on opening and closing the mouth.
3. Tenderness of the jaw muscles.
4. Difficulty or inability to open the mouth fully.
5. Locking of the jaw.

COMMON CAUSES

The most common cause of TMJ dysfunction is a breakdown in the complex system of the jaw muscles, ligaments and

temporomandibular joints. This often results in spasm of the chewing muscles, leading to pain and further dysfunction in the system and therefore further damage i.e. a cycle of pain. The causes of the initial breakdown could be:-

1. Oral habits (i.e. grinding or clenching the teeth), which can be stress related.
2. A direct blow to the TMJ (e.g. car accident or sporting injury).
3. Misaligned bite or poorly fitting teeth.
4. Arthritic changes in the TMJ.

TREATMENT

Treatment of TMJ dysfunction can take a number of forms and often will incorporate combinations of therapies:-

1. Ice or heat to relieve jaw muscle spasm.
2. Ultrasound to relieve muscle spasm and TMJ swelling and pain.
3. An occlusal (bite) splint made by a dentist to stop teeth grinding and clenching.
4. Retraining of the chewing muscles with an exercise program relaxation training to help relieve stress.
5. Surgery to repair TMJ damage in advanced cases.

WHAT TO DO

Temporomandibular joint dysfunction can be successfully treated by your Physiotherapist, often in conjunction with a dentist, and Sports Physician. Persistent problems, which do not respond to conservative therapies, may need medical or dental specialist referral.

