



# The facts about bite and jaw joint disorders

**Millions of Australians suffer from headaches and reduced jaw function due to bite and jaw joint disorders (*TMD aka Temporomandibular joint dysfunction*).**

## What causes TMD?

TMD is what happens when the jaw joint and the muscles that control it are out of alignment with the way the teeth bite together, causing problems with jaw function.

This is most commonly due to:

1. Tooth misalignment and missing teeth
2. Stresses from clenching of the jaws or grinding of the teeth
3. Accidents or trauma

## How to detect bite and jaw joint problems?

The most common signs of TMD are:

- 1) A clicking, popping or grating sound when opening or closing the mouth
- 2) Locking of the jaws when yawning or opening wide
- 3) Spasms or cramps in the jaw area
- 4) Excessive wearing or chipping of the teeth
- 5) Headache or pain in the jaw joint area



## How we treat TMD

### Initial (conservative) therapy

This involves improving the alignment of the bite to reduce stresses on the teeth, jaw joints and muscles.

This may include orthodontics or adjustments to the shape of the fillings and teeth. A night guard (splint) is useful to reduce stresses to teeth and jaw muscles while sleeping.

Physiotherapy may be a useful adjunct treatment for persistent muscle spasms.

### Surgery

Joint surgery is considered when conservative therapy has been unable to manage the pain and reduce jaw dysfunctions. Surgery is typically used only as the last resort.

## How to reduce ongoing problems with TMD

TMD cannot be cured – it can only be managed. Once the biting pattern is well aligned the jaw function can be improved and the pain reduced. It is important not to do any activities which aggravate your condition.

These activities include:

- 1) Wide opening and yawning
- 2) Chewing ice or other hard objects
- 3) Clenching and grinding your teeth

Management will be an ongoing concern.

## Emergency care

Acute pain from TMD can occur with little or no warning. If you are in acute pain from your jaw joints call us on **3263 2677** to schedule your emergency appointment.

Visit [www.todaysdentistry.com.au](http://www.todaysdentistry.com.au) or call **3263 2677** for more valuable facts for you and your family's dental health.