

# Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) Disorders

## What is the temporomandibular joint (TMJ)?

The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) connects the lower jaw, called the mandible, to the bone at the side of the head – the temporal bone. The TMJ is different from the body's other joints. The combination of hinge and sliding motions makes this joint among the most complicated in the body.

## What are TMJ disorders?

Researchers generally agree that the conditions fall into three main categories:

1. **Myofascial Pain** – the most common TMJ disorder, involves discomfort or pain in the muscles that control jaw function.
2. **Internal derangement** – a displaced disc, dislocated jaw, and or injury to the condyle.
3. **Arthritis** – refers to a group of degenerative/inflammatory joint disorders that can affect the TMJ

## What are the signs and symptoms of TMJ?

Pain, particularly in the chewing muscles and /or jaw joint, is the most common symptom. Other likely symptoms include:

- Radiating pain in the face, jaw, or neck,
- Jaw muscle stiffness,
- Limited movement or locking of the jaw,
- Painful clicking, popping or grating in the jaw joint when opening or closing the mouth,
- A change in the way the upper and lower teeth fit together.

## How are TMJ disorders treated?

General Dentist, Oral Surgeons, Physicians and Rheumatologist provide care to people with TMJ disorders. Treatment can include:

- Self-Care Practices – eating soft foods, applying ice packs, avoiding extreme jaw movements, gentle jaw stretching,
- Pain Medications – over the counter medicines or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs,
- Stabilization Splints – plastic guard that fit on upper and/or lower teeth.
- Surgical Implants – replacement of jaw joints.

**If you think you have a TMJ disorder  
speak with dental or medical provider.**

