

# Temporomandibular disorders

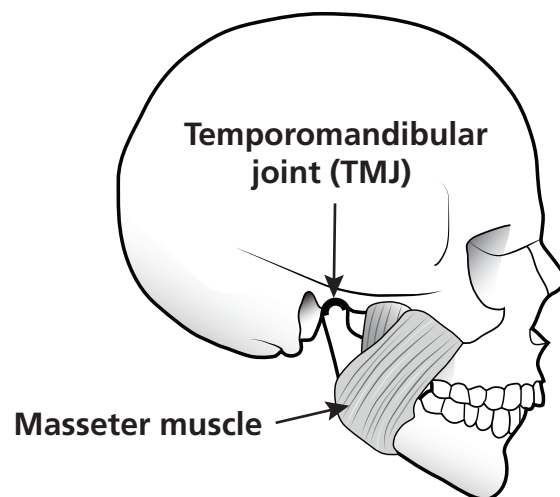


## Information for patients

Charles Clifford Dental Hospital

### What are temporomandibular disorders?

- Temporomandibular disorders (**TMDs**) are a group of conditions that cause **pain** and **dysfunction** in the **temporomandibular joint** (jaw joint) and the **muscles** that control jaw movement (see image below).



### The Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) and Muscles

- About **1 in 3** people are affected and these conditions appear to be more common in women than men.
- For the vast majority of people, pain in the area of the jaw joint or muscles **does not signal a serious problem**.
- Generally, discomfort from these conditions is **occasional** and **temporary**, often occurring in cycles. The pain eventually goes away with little or no treatment. About **1 in 20 people**, however, develop significant long-term symptoms.

### Where can I find further information about TMDs?

There is helpful information about TMDs on the following website:

- <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/TMJ/>

Scroll down to 'Health Information' and click on 'TMJ Disorders'.

## How can I reduce stress / strain on my jaw joint and jaw muscles?

### Avoid oral habits

- Emotions can be translated into increased **muscle activity**, tension and pain.
- **Oral habits** are well-established patterns of inappropriate muscle activity. They increase strain on the temporomandibular joints and muscles and may contribute to your symptoms and may act as a barrier to your recovery.
- **Examples** of such oral habits include:
  - Tooth contact, clenching or grinding
  - Nail biting
  - Chewing chewing-gum
  - Pen chewing
  - Lip sucking
  - Habitual protrusion (movement of your lower jaw forwards)
- **Monitor** your oral habits and any related pain, and especially be aware of the circumstances in which these habits occur.
- Greater **awareness** of such habits and the circumstances in which they occur will help you to **avoid** this inappropriate muscular activity. This will help to reduce the strain on the temporomandibular joints and muscles and improve your symptoms.

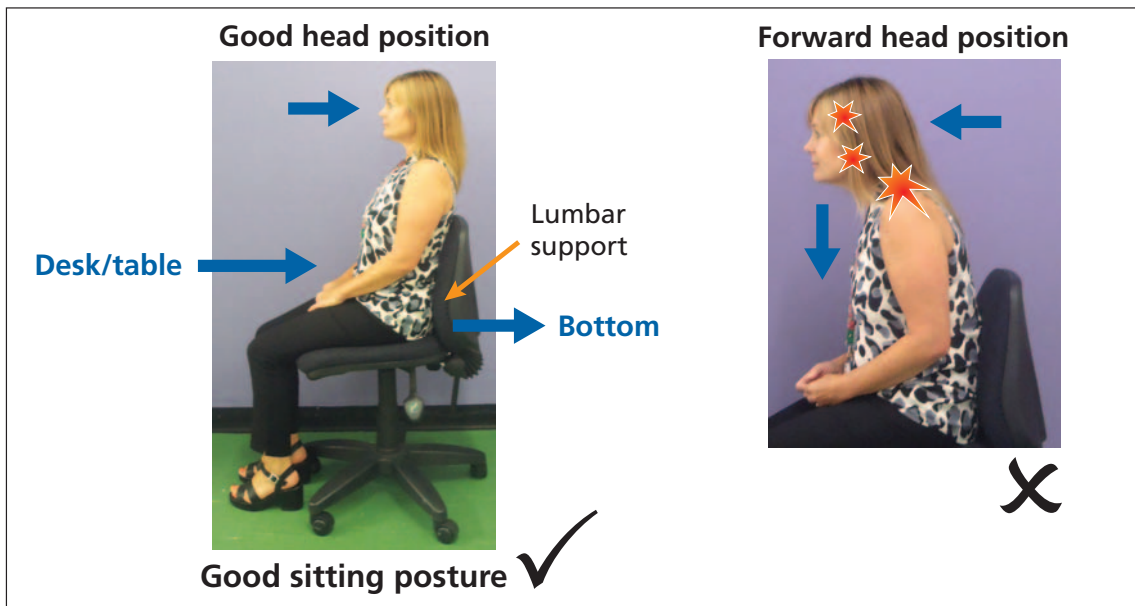
### Regularly check your 'relaxed' jaw rest position



- **Teeth apart:** Say 'Emma' – so your jaw and mouth drop open slightly.
- **Tongue on the roof of your mouth:** Just behind your upper front teeth in the 'clucking' position – make a 'cluck' noise with your tongue to find this position.
- **Regularly check** your jaw 'rest position' throughout the day, especially after eating, while working on your computer, driving etc.

**Remember - Keep your tongue up and teeth apart!**

## Avoid a 'forward' head posture

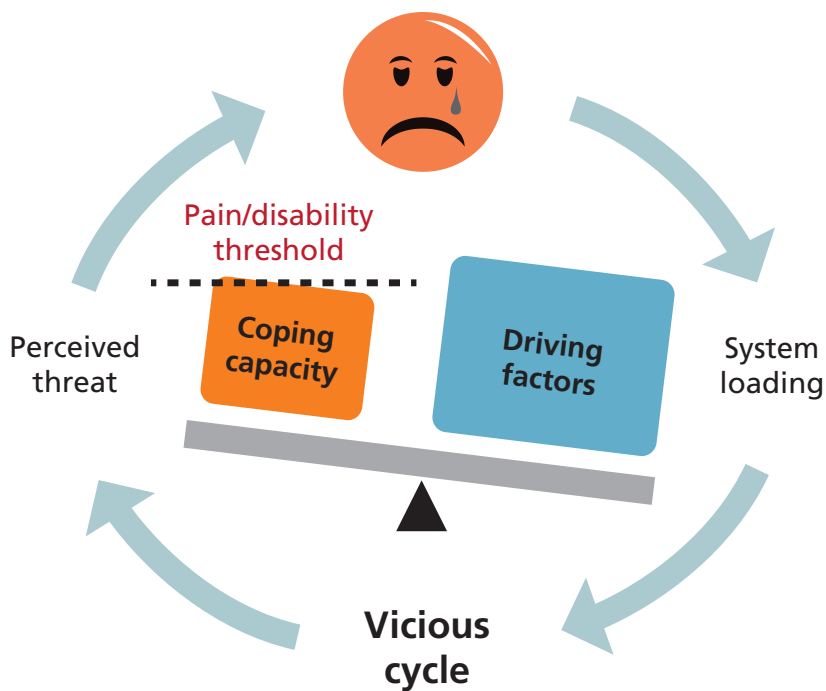


- Regularly check and **correct your sitting position** (see image above) to prevent a forward head posture. A prolonged forward head posture will increase stress on your joints and muscles.
- **Sit correctly** when working at a computer, driving, watching TV, reading, eating, knitting etc.
- Use chairs with **lumbar support** (or use a lumbar roll).
- Always push your **bottom to the very back of the chair**.
- When sitting at a desk or table **pull your chair in**, so your tummy makes contact with the desk or table.
- Position your **keyboard and mouse within easy reach**.
- Position your **monitor at eye level**.
- **Use a document stand** when inputting information to the computer.
- Don't sit for long periods without a **break** – stand and stretch every 15 minutes.

## Other ways you can reduce stress / strain on your jaw

- Eat a **soft diet**, avoid hard crunchy foods, and cut food into small pieces.
- **Chew slowly**. Chew on both sides or alternate sides.
- **Avoid caffeine**. Caffeine can cause increased muscle activity.
- Avoid repeated or prolonged **wide mouth opening**.
- Keep the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth when **yawning** to prevent excessive mouth opening.
- Do not rest your **chin in your hands**.
- Avoid **sleeping** on your front.
- If your dentist has provided you with a **bite appliance**, use it as directed.
- Use simple **analgesics** or **non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication** as directed by your GP or Pharmacist.
- Regular **daily exercise** such as walking is beneficial for your general health.

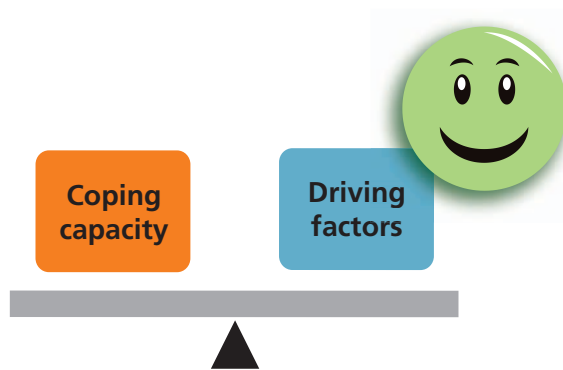
## Persistent cycle of pain



Persistent temporomandibular disorder is often associated with a complex combination of driving factors that can coexist to maintain a persistent cycle of pain and disability.

## Your driving factors?

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