

# Patient Help Sheet

## Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction (TMJ)

Here are some tips that you can use to help balance and support your health during this time. Please feel free to call me if you have further questions or concerns.

"A man may esteem himself happy when that which is his food is also his medicine." - Henry David Thoreau

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### Acupressure Points

Rubbing acupuncture points with your finger for 30-60 seconds can stimulate and promote the circulation of Qi within your own body, restoring health and well-being.

**Stomach 6 (ST6):** Location: one finger width anterior and superior to the angle to the mandible. You can find this point when you clench your teeth. Functions: Alleviates facial pain, TMJ, toothache, facial twitching, facial pain and paralysis.

**Stomach 7 (ST7):** Location: To best locate this point, open the mouth. The point is located anterior to the ear, in the depression between the zygomatic arch and the mandibular notch. Functions: Benefits the ears, jaw and teeth. Good for hearing issues, tinnitus, ear pain and TMJ.

**Gallbladder 3 (GB3):** Location: First locate ST7, then run a finger superior, over the zygomatic arch, into the hollow. Functions: Helps the ears, alleviates facial pain and TMJ. Locate point for headaches.

**Triple Warmer 5 (TW5):** Location: Roughly 4 inches above the wrist. In the depression between the radius and the ulna, on the radial side of the extensor digitorum communis tendosn. Functions: Good for headaches, especially on the side of head and neck. Important point to help alleviate a cold with early onset. Nosebleed, facial pain, TMJ, toothache, mouth ulcers and ear disorders.

### Self-Care for TMJ

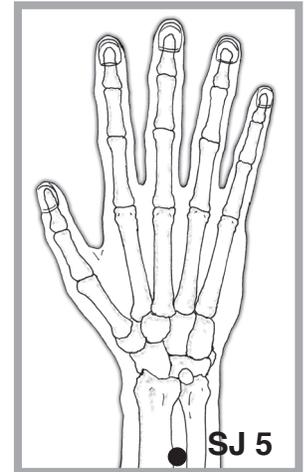
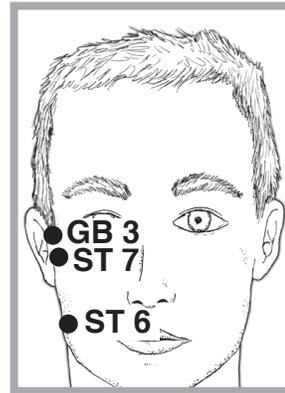
Often jaw problems resolve on their own in several weeks to months. If you have recently experienced TMJ pain and/or dysfunction, you may find relief with some or all of the following therapies.

**Moist Heat.** Moist heat from a heat pack or a hot water bottle wrapped in a warm, moist towel can improve function and reduce pain. Be careful to avoid burning yourself when using heat.

**Ice.** Ice packs can decrease inflammation and also numb pain and promote healing. Do not place an ice pack directly on your skin. Keep the pack wrapped in a clean cloth while you are using it. Do not use an ice pack for more than 10 - 15 minutes.

**Soft Diet.** Soft or blended foods allow the jaw to rest temporarily. Remember to avoid hard, crunchy, and chewy foods. Do not stretch your mouth to accommodate such foods as corn on the cob, apples, or whole fruits.

**Over-the-Counter Analgesics.** For many people with TMJ Disorders, short-term use of over-the-counter pain medicines or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, may provide temporary relief from jaw discomfort. When necessary, your dentist or doctor can prescribe stronger pain or anti-inflammatory medications, muscle relaxants, or antidepressants to help ease symptoms.



**Jaw Exercises.** Slow, gentle jaw exercises may help increase jaw mobility and healing. Your health care provider or a physical therapist can evaluate your condition and suggest appropriate exercises based on your individual needs. A recent study found therapeutic jaw exercises bring earlier recovery of jaw function compared to splints! Click here to read the specific jaw exercises used in this study.

**Relaxation Techniques.** Relaxation and guided imagery can be helpful in dealing with the pain that accompanies TMJ dysfunction. Deep, slow breathing enhances relaxation and modulates pain sensations. Some have found yoga, massage, and meditation helpful in reducing stress and aiding relaxation.

**Side Sleeping.** Sleep on your side using pillow support between shoulder and neck.

**Relax Facial Muscles.** Make a concerted effort to relax your lips, and keep teeth apart.

**Yawning.** Use your fist to support your chin as you yawn to prevent damage to the joint and prevent your jaw from locking open.