

# TMJSyndrome

## RelatedTerms

•TemporomandibularJointSyndrome

## PrincipalProposedNaturalTreatments

•None

## OtherProposedNaturalTreatments

• [Acupuncture](#); [CapsaicinCream](#); [Chiropractic](#); [Chondroitin](#); [EMGBiofeedback](#); [Glucosamine](#); [Massage](#); [Prolotherapy](#)

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Temporomandibularjoint(TMJ)syndromeisadisorderinvolvingthetwojoints(oneoneachside)thatattachthelowerjawtotheskull.Thesetwojointsopenandclosethemouth,andarelocateddirectlyinfrontofeachoftheears.InTMJsyndrome,thearoundthetemporomandibularjointsbecomeschronicallytenderandinflamed.Symptomsincludethefollowing:

- Paininthetemporomandibularjoint
- Popping,clicking,orgratinginthetemporomandibularjointwhileeatingand/or drinking
- Asensationofthejaw“catching”or“locking”briefly,whileattemptingtoopenorclosethemouth,orwhilechewing
- Difficultyopeningthemouthcompletely
- Paininthejaw
- Facialpain
- Muscelpainand/orspasmintheareaofthetemporomandibularjoint
- Headache
- Earpain
- Neckand/orshoulderpain

TMJsyndromeoftenoccursinpeoplewhohavehadaccidentsorinjuriesinvolvingtheirjaw,butmanyothershavehadnosuchincident.Itisbelievedthatgrindingtheteethorclenchingthejawinresponsetostressmaytriggertheconditioninmanycases.Otherpossiblecausesincludearthritisoftemporomandibularjoint, facialbonedefects,andmisalignmentsofthejaworofthebite.

TheunderlyingcauseofTMJsyndromeisnotknown.Inmostcases,thejointappearstobehealthy,suggestingthatitisthesofttissuearoundthejointratherthanthejointitselfthathastheproblem.However,somecasesofTMJsyndromemaybecausedbyTMJarthritis,TMJdislocation,orotherformsoftruejointinjury.

TreatmentofTMJincludesstressmanagement,avoidanceofcertainfoodsthattriggerdiscomfort(suchasgum orbeefjerky),andanti-inflammatorymedications.Theolderantidepressantdrugamitriptyline,takeninlow doses,<sup>1</sup>aswellasthemusclerelaxantcyclobenzaprine <sup>2</sup>mayhelpaswell.

Accordingtoafewcontrolledtrials,somepeoplewithmoresevereformsofTMJmaybenefitfromtheuseofa dentalappliance.<sup>3-6</sup>Finally,onrareoccasions,surgerymaybenecessary.

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## ProposedNaturalTreatments

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This supplement glucosamine, taken alone or in combination with chondroitin, has shown considerable promise for the treatment of osteoarthritis. Because osteoarthritis of the temporomandibular joint can play a role in some cases of TMJ syndrome, researchers have begun to investigate the potential role of these supplements in treating the condition. Promising results were seen in a double-blind study that compared glucosamine to ibuprofen in the treatment of 45 people with TMJ arthritis. <sup>7</sup> Over the 3-month study period, the supplement proved equal in effectiveness to the drug. However, because this study lacked a placebo group, it cannot be taken as fully reliable. Another double-blind study, this one involving glucosamine without chondroitin, did have a placebo group, but too many participants dropped out to allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn. <sup>8</sup>

EMG biofeedback is a form of biofeedback therapy that involves teaching a person to gain conscious control of muscle tension. A meta-analysis (formal statistical review) of published studies suggests that EMG biofeedback might be helpful for TMJ pain. <sup>9</sup> However, the reviewers noted that the evidence is as yet incomplete, and more (and better quality) research is needed.

Similarly, while preliminary controlled trials suggest that acupuncture may be helpful for TMJ syndrome, more research is needed. <sup>10,12</sup> A preliminary study compared Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM incorporates acupuncture among other treatments) and Naturopathic Medicine (NM) against care given by clinic staffed by TMJ specialists. Researchers found that both TCM and NM provided greater benefit among 128 women. <sup>13</sup> Although subjects were randomized into the different groups, there was no blinding and practitioners were permitted to treat each subject in any way they saw fit.

A cream made from cayenne and other hot peppers (capsaicin cream) has shown promise for a variety of painful conditions. However, one study failed to find capsaicin cream more effective than placebo cream for TMJ syndrome. <sup>11</sup>

Other treatments sometimes recommended for TMJ, but that lack reliable scientific support, include chiropractic, massage, and prolotherapy.

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