

TMJ Disorders



Overview

If you have pain in your jaw, or if you have problems opening or closing your mouth, you may have a TMJ disorder. That's a problem with one or both of your temporomandibular joints. These joints connect your jaw to your skull. They act as hinges. They also allow your jaw to slide forward and back.

Causes

A TMJ disorder can develop because of damage to the shock-absorbing disc that helps each joint work smoothly. It can happen because of arthritis, which damages the cartilage in these joints. It may develop because of the alignment of your teeth and jaws. It may happen because you unconsciously grind your teeth or clench your jaw. And, it can develop because of a jaw injury.

Symptoms

Symptoms include pain or tenderness in your jaw. It may hurt on one or both sides. You may have pain in your face or ear. It may hurt when you chew. And, your jaw may click or lock.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the cause of your disorder, and on your symptoms. You may benefit from a splint or a mouth guard. Medications may help. You may need to learn to avoid certain things, like biting your fingernails. You may need physical therapy. If these aren't helpful, you may need to have a procedure to correct the problem. Your dentist or doctor can create a plan that's right for you.

