



Exercises to Improve the Function of the Jaw Joints and Reduce Pain

Exercises to improve the function of the jaw joints and reduce pain

The purpose of these exercises is to prevent any clicking of the temporomandibular joints (jaw joints) and to strengthen the muscles which pull the jaw backwards. These exercises will relax the muscles that pull the jaw forwards and from side to side as the jaw opens, therefore should take some strain off the joints and reduce any pain that you have been suffering.

Initially, set aside two five minute periods every day, at a time when you can be by yourself and relaxed. You may want to do this quietly on your own in the bathroom or bedroom.

Preferably, sit upright in a chair, and carry out these manoeuvres:

- Close your mouth on your back teeth, resting the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth just behind your upper front teeth.
- Run the tip of your tongue backwards onto the soft palate, as far back as it will go, keeping your teeth just together.
- Force your tongue backwards to keep it in contact with the soft palate, and slowly open your mouth until you begin to feel your tongue just being pulled away from your soft palate. Do not try to open your mouth any further, just keep it in this position for five seconds and then let your mouth close.
- Relax for a few seconds and then repeat this manoeuvre, in a firm but relaxed manner over the next five minutes.

As you open your mouth, you will probably feel tension in the muscles at the back of your jaw and under your chin. For the first few times, you should check in a mirror that you are opening your jaw straight (the lower teeth should move in a straight line downwards), with no side-to-side movements.

If you are doing the exercise correctly, there should be no clicks or noises from the joints. If there are, you may not be doing the exercises correctly so read the notes again carefully to be sure you are doing them properly.

For the first week – do not do the exercises more than the recommended amount. Initially, it may make any pains you have feel a little worse. This is because some muscles are not used to the exercise, but this should soon wear off.

After the first week, do the exercises as often as you can, and this should help strengthen your jaw.

If this exercise is done correctly and regularly over a three or four week period, you should retrain your muscles so that your jaw opens and closes smoothly without any clicks or jerks, and any pain that you have been suffering should subside.

More advice to reduce pain and inflammation

- Do not open mouth too wide
- Whilst yawning support lower jaw with palm of hand
- Do not chew chewing gum
- Avoid nail biting
- Avoid very chewy foods e.g. steak
- Cut food up into small pieces so not to open too wide whilst eating, e.g. baguettes, apples
- Use a warm compress over painful external area of face
- Take anti-inflammatory medication as prescribed

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Accessibility

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