

## Changing the Face of TMJ

The temporomandibular joint (TMJ), or the jaw joint, is possibly one of the most used and abused joints. These joints are found in front of each ear and attach the lower jaw to the skull. It is heavily utilized and often neglected when we: eat, talk, yawn, bite nails, and clenching or grinding teeth.

Pain associated with TMJ problems is quite common and can be the cause of many other kinds of aches and pains such as: headaches, upper neck/shoulder/back pain, ear pain, facial pains, local pain and clicking or locking of the jaw.

Some simple tips to help avoid aggravating the joints:

- Avoid chewing heavy meats, nuts, raw carrots, and other tough foods
- Avoid taking big bites into foods like burgers or apples (cut the food into small pieces)
- Do not chew gum, pens, jewellery or hard candy
- Avoid intentionally clicking the jaw
- Avoid clenching teeth together
- Stop nail biting
- Limit speaking if it is an aggravating factor
- Avoid prolonged slouching and the forward head posture

I have recently upgraded my training to improve my treatment skills and techniques for TMJ problems. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding TMJ pain or any other problems.

## Ankle Injury and Hip Replacement?

Injuries to the ankle and the knee could cause problems with the hips in later life. Osteoarthritis, or wear and tear of the hip, could be the result of an old ankle sprain or knee injury. Because of the injury we walk differently to compensate and don't use our gluts (buttock muscles) properly, causing them to get weak. These muscles are some of the major stabilizers of the hip. As a result, specific exercises for strengthening the gluts are important in re-gaining normal use of the hips and prevent problems later in life.

## Back and Neck Care

Historically, medical practitioners have advised that lower back pain should be treated by flattening the curve of the lower back (the *Lumbar lordosis*). This has traditionally been achieved by encouraging pelvic tilt postures. The problem with this somewhat antiquated advice is that pelvic tilt exercises could not only have a negative affect on people with back problems, but maintaining a pelvic tilt while attempting day to day activities is not practical. Imagine a basketball player trying to run and jump while trying to maintain a pelvic tilt, or a hockey player skating down the ice in this rather uncomfortable position. This practice of maintaining such an awkward posture does not treat the cause of the problem and will be unlikely to afford long term relief.

Instead, when standing, use the following tips for maintaining good posture:

- stand as tall as you can
- relax your shoulders
- breathe normally
- Balance your head so that it is not poking forward
- Gently lift your chest bone slightly (but not as much as an inflated military posture)
- Pull your stomach in (but not enough to push your hips out)
- Keep your knees straight without locking them
- Balance your weight towards the front of your feet more than the back

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## Quick Tips

### Ergonomics

The Oxford dictionary defines ergonomics as "the relationship between people and their working environment as it affects efficiency, safety and ease of action."

### How does this apply to your computer?

#### Monitor

Place your monitor directly in front of you.

Position the top of the screen at or slightly below eye level.

Place the screen approximately an arm's length away.

#### Keyboard

Place the keyboard directly in front of you.

Lie the keyboard flat or slope it down away from you.

#### Chair

Place feet flat on the floor.

Place the lumbar roll of chair to fit the lumbar curve of your back.

Place the back of your knees a fist's width from the front edge of your chair.

Position your thighs so they are parallel to the ground.

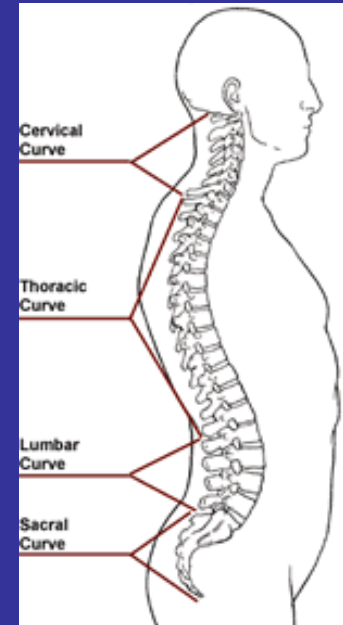
## Back and Neck Care cont.

Properly balancing your body decreases the amount of work necessary to stand and a lot of indistinguishable neck and back aches are quickly relieved. Remember that your body shifts and moves naturally, so maintaining a rigid posture is not beneficial either. Walking and moving should be done smoothly, while trying to maintain good posture.

Most often, the problems we encounter with the back and neck are not due to a traumatic injury, but rather daily misuse of our spines. Your everyday activities have a tremendous impact on the amount of discomfort and pain we experience, so modifying your daily habits can make a great deal of difference in improving your level of comfort.

### Spine

There are three curves in a normal spine: *Cervical lordosis*, *Thoracic kyphosis*, and *Lumbar lordosis*.



## Heat versus Cold

I often get the question "When do I use heat and when do I use cold?" For acute injuries, like sprains or strains, ice is used to keep the swelling down and decrease the inflammation. Ice goes with *RICE*: Rest Ice Compression Elevation.

The next question is "How long do I use ice?" For minor injuries, ice is used for the first 24 hours, but for more severe sprains and strains or muscle pulls/tears ice is used for 48 hours. Ice should be applied for 10 minutes and then removed for 15, repeating as many times as possible in the 24 to 48 hours. After the swelling and inflammation have been treated with ice, I like to switch to heat.

In general muscles respond better to heat, so most muscle pains, aches, and pulls I prefer to treat with heat. For example: if you took a long walk and your calf muscles are stiff, heat would feel and work better than ice; if your back was sore from shovelling the snow, use a heating pad; if your neck is stiff from studying, use heat. Most muscle pains are treated best with heat.

Heat is usually kept on for a maximum time of 20 minutes because it can make the muscles tired and will be less effective if applied for longer periods of time. If necessary, heat can continue to be applied for 20 minutes every hour.

## From Dick's Kitchen

### Easy layered nacho dip

You will need: 1 brick of softened cream cheese  
125 ml sour cream (or Miracle Whip Salad Dressing)  
1 small jar salsa  
several handfuls of grated cheese (cheddar or tex-mex)  
1 bag nacho chips

Mix the cream cheese and sour cream together, and spread on a plate or in a pie dish. Add a layer of salsa, followed by a layer of grated cheese. Top with chopped veggies if desired, and serve with nacho chips.

Variations: Use cream cheese and sour cream base, but top with.....

Greek Dip: chopped tomatoes, cucumbers and sliced black olives, and sprinkle with Greek Salad Feta Cheese. Serve with pita bread.

Pizza Dip: pizza or pasta sauce, sliced pepperoni, and chopped green peppers, and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Serve with crackers.

## VPHYSIO

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