

## **Help for TMJ Pain and Headaches**

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People who suffer from Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (TMD also known as TMJ) may experience symptoms such as jaw pain, popping or clicking sounds in the TMJ, facial pain, earaches, headaches, and/or sinus problems. They may notice difficulty performing simple daily tasks such as eating large morsels of food, singing, or talking for prolonged periods of time.

Causes of TMD can include trauma (motor vehicle accident or fall), poor oral habits such as biting fingernails, bruxism (grinding of the teeth), clenching the teeth, or high levels of stress and anxiety. The levels of stress and anxiety that many people experience has been intensified due to the pandemic, which has resulted in intensification of tension, headaches, and TMD symptoms.

TMD can often be due to other associated factors that frequently are not treated. Tight and tense muscles and other soft tissues in the face, head, neck, shoulder or upper back can contribute if they are not working efficiently. Also, mobility deficits of the joints and soft tissues in the upper neck, upper back, ribcage or even the shoulder can contribute to the symptoms.

The pain symptoms and functional limitations may seem debilitating, but physical therapy can help. Physical Therapy treatment of TMD typically involves hands on manual therapy to mobilize the jaw, neck, and surrounding soft tissues and exercises to retrain appropriate function of the TMJ and neck. Contacting your Physical Therapist is the first place to start! In Illinois, a prescription or referral is not required from your doctor or dentist to be treated by a physical therapist. This means you can choose physical therapy first and immediately start treatment and start feeling better right away.