

COLUMN

Could you be Suffering from TMJ?

TMJ is one of those buzz words that everyone seems to hear about these days. But what exactly is it? In reality, we all have (TMJ) Temporomandibular Joints, but usually when a reference is made it refers to head or jaw pain in this area. There are many signs and symptoms that can fall under a "TMJ Disorder." This month I want to shed some light on this common syndrome that affects the quality of life of so many people.



Dentally Speaking
by
Jeffrey S. Haddad

Some of the most common TMJ symptoms:

- Daily Headaches
- Migraines
- Jaw Pain
- Ear Congestion
- Ear ringing (Tinnitus)
- Dizziness (Vertigo)
- Neck Pain

For many people, dealing with TMJ pain and its symptoms becomes a normal part of life. Many people have been seen by numerous physicians throughout their lives without any improvement in these symptoms. Sadly, they are usually given suggestions on ways to manage their pain rather than solutions to fix the actual problem. Physicians typically are not trained to treat TMJ problems. Commonly, physicians will refer chronic pain patients to a dentist who is specially trained to treat problems dealing with head, ear and neck pain. In most cases, a majority of these symptoms can be caused by having an unbalanced or improper bite.

There are three components that affect your bite:

1. Your teeth
2. Your facial muscles
3. Your right and left jaw joints (TMJ)

When these three things are not in balance, a TMJ problem can occur. Approximately 90 percent of people in the world have poor bites; luckily, most people can adapt throughout life with little or no discomfort. However, some people are not able to accommodate and are thrown into a pain spiral at some point in their life. If a person has had extensive dental work, is a severe

clencher or grinder, or has missing teeth, it can have a significant effect on the surrounding facial muscles and joints which can lead to discomfort and pain. This would be similar to having one leg 2 inches longer than the other leg. For years, things may feel fine,

but over time you would start to notice discomfort due to the imbalance. These symptoms could arise anywhere since the entire body would be trying to accommodate the longer leg.

Do you suffer from daily headaches? Have you been diagnosed with migraines?

Commonly, people do not realize these symptoms can be the result of a poor bite causing a TMJ disorder. The majority of headaches are considered "muscle tension headaches," and can be directly related to a person's unbalanced bite. Many people diagnosed with migraines can actually be suffering from these muscle tension headaches. This syndrome is the source of chronic pain for many, and can result in severe wear, or fracturing, of your teeth and restorations, leading to tooth loss. This vicious cycle results in an even more unbalanced bite causing a person's headaches and pain to worsen over time.

Common signs in the mouth that can lead to TMJ problems:

- Premature tooth wear
- Tooth loss
- Teeth clenching
- Teeth grinding
- Tooth pain
- Tooth sensitivity
- Limited opening of the jaw
- Locking of the jaw
- Clicking or popping of the jaw joints

Depending on a dentist's training and experience in this area, they should be able to determine if a patient has a poor bite through a thorough exam and precise measurements. Some dentists will then treat the patient themselves or refer them to another dental professional that focuses on TMJ treatments. Our office has extensive training in neuromuscular dentistry which addresses a person's unbal-

anced bite and relieves their daily headaches, migraines and other related symptoms. We have been successfully treating TMJ patients for almost 15 years in predictable and very conservative ways. With the help of specialized computer monitoring equipment we are able to identify which muscles are being affected and track their improvement. This makes people very comfortable with pursuing this treatment when they are confident they will benefit from it. Seeking treatment now will improve the outcome, decrease treatment time, and avoid the probable risk of symptoms increasing.

Complimentary TMJ Consultations For National Dental Health Month
If you are experiencing any of the symptoms described here, please call for your complimentary exam and consultation, 248-656-2020.

We have helped hundreds of people just like yourself.

Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S. of Doolin Haddad of Rochester, completed his dental education at the University of Michigan in 2001. Dr. Haddad is a fellow of the prestigious Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies. He lectures nationally on cosmetic dentistry, TMJ disorders and practice management. For more information, visit www.rochesteradvanceddentistry.com.

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