

Jaw Joint Concerns (TMJ)

The jaw joint is situated just in front of the ear. For certain people, this joint may pop or click when closing or opening wide the oral cavity but does not cause any discomfort. However, this could be a major source of chronic headaches and severe discomfort.

During an examination the jaw joint can be analyzed using a Doppler ultrasound that allows us to examine for any internal disorder. Behind the ear, the joint space will also get investigated for nerve impingement and by pulsating the face muscles, even more information can be accumulated to see if in fact the source of discomfort is coming from the jaw joint.

Most of the common causes of jaw joint pain include trauma or injury to the jaw, unevenness in the bite, hereditary or congenital issues, existing medical conditions, loss of the back teeth, or clenching or grinding problems.

Jaw joint disorders are generally difficult to treat, depending on the severity and source of the pain. The most common source of discomfort are the muscles in the face, the teeth, or from inflammation around the jaw joint area itself.

There are a few different treatment methods that range from a specific regimen of prescription medications, acupuncture, or physiotherapy. If the problems are related to muscle or teeth, a splint will often be made. This type of splint is commonly known as a Bruxism splint, biting appliance, or mouth guard. Its main purpose is to reduce the stress on the teeth caused when they grind against one another or when they are tightly clenched together. The reduction in pressure will allow the face muscles to relax and will place far less pressure on the jaw joint.

Treatment times for this disorder will vary depending on the individual and the severity of the condition. On some occasions a patient can find immediate relief, or it may take a person several years to obtain positive results.