

# Occlusal Equilibration: TMJ Treatment

Occlusal equilibration is a term used in dentistry to discuss the adjustment of the bite relationship. The mandible or lower jaw is a “u-shaped” bone which has two joints called the temporomandibular joints (TMJ) and are located just in front of the ear. When the jaw system is functioning properly, the lower jaw is able to freely hinge at the joints and close together with the lower teeth contacting the upper teeth very evenly all the way around the arch. This creates a “solid bite”. When there is a discrepancy in the bite relationship to the fully seated joints, then problems can develop. Very often, the jaw will have to shift in order to fully close the teeth all the way together. This shifting of the jaw creates stress at the joint level. We will often see manifestations of this shifting, whereby muscle tenderness develops in the jaw system, clenching and grinding of the teeth often occurs, joint discomfort may be present along with signs of instability in the bite relationship which include wear of the teeth, looseness of the teeth, etc.

When these signs of instability are found as we examine your mouth, then we consider occlusal equilibration as a possible remedy. We study the bite relationship by way of mounted, diagnostic study models and determine if adjustment of the biting surfaces of the teeth will correct the problem. Once studied, we can proceed with adjusting your bite relationship to re-establish harmony in the biting system. We do this by selectively reshaping the biting surfaces of the individual teeth, which may be interfering with the proper joint/bite relationship. By making these corrective changes, we are able establish a harmonious and stable system, which eliminates the destructive forces previously present.

Our goal in this therapy is to allow the joints to fully seat, the muscles to relax and the teeth to fully meet together at the proper position and to function properly in movement. Establishing this stability in the system can prevent many problems that are serious in nature. These include:

- Muscle-tension headaches
- Temporomandibular joint dysfunction (TMD)
- Severe wear of your natural teeth
- Loose teeth
- Chipping teeth
- Gum recession and other associated problems
- Grooves that form on exposed root surfaces
- Grinding or clenching of your teeth