

POST OP INSTRUCTIONS FOR TMJ SPLINT

PURPOSE: Since the treatment you are able to receive is mainly orthopedic in nature we have fabricated an orthopedic jaw repositioning appliance for you. This appliance will help muscles which are in spasm to relax and will reduce or eliminate facial pain and headache. It is not a cure in and of itself. Our success will depend in large part upon the way you treat your TMJ. With following these home care instructions consistently, you will be well on your way to a successful treatment. In order to break up the old harmful habits of the jaw malposition, the appliance **MUST BE WORN**. You must learn to eat with it, laugh with it, and speak with it. Wear it full time, 24 hours per day.

USAGE: After three days you should have no difficulty in speaking. To speed up the process of getting accustomed to the appliance, practice talking or reading aloud very slowly before a mirror for fifteen minutes at a time, three times a day, for the first three days. You may also notice an excessive flow of saliva for the first two days because the salivary glands will be fooled by the presence of the appliance and will react as if it were food. Do not be concerned with this; it will soon disappear. Make every effort not to strain the ligaments of your temporomandibular joint/s unnecessarily. Should you find yourself clenching your teeth together, try to remember “Lips together, teeth apart.” Try to sleep on your side, and avoid sleeping in such a way that your fist is beneath your jaw.

FOOD & DIET: You can only learn to eat with the appliance by wearing it at all times. It will seem strange for the first three days, but if you persist you should have no difficulty. You should restrict yourself to a soft diet, e.g., eggs, hamburger, chicken, fish, soft cheeses, yogurt, soups, various breakfast cereals, pasta, cannelloni, lasagnas, soufflés and desserts. Avoid foods that are harder to chew, e.g. steak, raw vegetables, hard bread/croutons, apples, etc. For the next few months, be sure to cut all foods into small, bite-sized pieces. Also avoid using chewing gum during this period of treatment.

CARE OF THE APPLIANCE AND TEETH: Brush both sides of the appliance carefully with toothpaste every time you brush your teeth and rinse it thoroughly in an antiseptic solution such as Listerine, Scope or Green Mint. When brushing the teeth, pay special attention to the inner surface of the teeth. Brush them very carefully; then proceed to the other surfaces of the teeth. Remove your appliance after each meal and wash it off under the tap in the bathroom. This is especially important for the first few weeks since the tongue can allow food to get lodged in the appliance. Also rinse your mouth thoroughly so no food collects around the teeth. Whenever you brush your teeth, brush, brush your appliance at the same time while it is out of your mouth.

POSSIBLE INCONVENIENCES: In order not to aggravate muscles of the neck, jaws and back, avoid carrying, pushing or lifting heavy objects (groceries, sewing machines, laundry, windows, stalled cars, etc.) Avoid rising your arms over your head as when hanging wallpaper or painting a ceiling. When the appliance is removed for cleaning, you may notice that none of your back teeth meet one another. This is to be expected. You are making progress if this happens. Actually, what has occurred is that the appliance is allowing your jaw to find its proper position. The muscles that suspend your jaw are going out of spasm and regaining their proper length. It is the lengthening of these muscles that creates the space between the teeth.

While you are under treatment do not move your jaw side to side to see if it clicks or grates or hurts. Do not chew gum, do not grit or clench your teeth. Try to limit the degree of mouth movement for the first three weeks. Then gradually and cautiously increase your range of jaw movements, always staying below the level which causes pain. Repeat to yourself over and over again during the day, “lips together--teeth apart.”

APPLIANCE ADJUSTMENT: The biting surfaces of the appliance may be changed whenever you come to the office. Don't be alarmed if you notice that one side is thick while the other side is thin. This difference is due to malposition of the jaw. When the appliance is adjusted in the office thin areas may appear in it and tiny particles may even break off. This is nothing to worry about, but is an indication that the jaw is finding its proper position. After an office visit, a thin area may wear through or snap off. In such a case, remove the appliance from your mouth, smooth off the rough edges of the broken area with an emery board, and reinsert the appliance