

Useful Telephone Numbers

ENT Partnership

Surrey Clinic – 01252 852552

Frimley Park Hospital

Switchboard – 01276 604604

Parkside – 01276 604703

FI (Children's Ward) – 01276 604226

ENT Ward – 01276 604130

Clare Park Hospital

Switchboard – 01252 850216

Information for Patients on

Jaw joint Malfunction

(painful or clicking jaw joints)

The ENT Partnership – Surrey Clinic

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The ENT Consultants are

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Appointed to Frimley Park Hospital in 2003. Special interest in rhinology including rhinoplasty surgery and also voice problems.

David Jonathan FRCS.

Appointed to Frimley Park Hospital in 1991. Special interest in ear surgery, including implantable hearing aids. Involved in the regional training of ENT surgeons.

Andrew McCombe MD FRCS (ORL).

Appointed to Frimley Park Hospital in 1995. Special interest in head and neck surgery. Involved in the management of NHS services. Special interest in medicolegal work.

Sources of additional information

The Surrey & Hampshire ENT Partnership

www.entpartnership.co.uk

British Association of Otorhinolaryngologists

www.entuk.org

What causes the problem?

The majority of jaw joint problems are mechanical in origin and result from excessive use, for example, chewing very hard foods (tough meats, toffees, chewing gum), opening the mouth too wide (yawning, sighing, singing, shouting) and various tension habits associated with stress, such as tooth clenching and grinding.

As a result, the ligaments holding the jaw joint together become stretched and the disk of cartilage within becomes displaced. This produces a click or grating feeling when the jaw is moved and if the damage becomes worse, then pain occurs in the joint (often interpreted as earache). Associated cramp or spasms of the jaw muscles may occur producing a dull ache or a sharp stabbing pain inside the head, cheek and along the bottom of the jaw (and stiffness which prevents wide opening of the mouth).

This is commonly worse at the end of the day when the muscles are tired, or in the morning if there is a tooth grinding habit during the night.

How to help the problem

The majority of jaw joint malfunctions get better with sustained rest. With time, the ligaments become stronger again and the cartilage repositions. The following guidelines will help:

Avoid

- Opening the mouth too wide
- Biting into apples
- Biting into large rolls
- Chewing gum/ toffee
- Chewing tough meats or raw vegetables
- Nail biting
- Shouting and singing
- Open mouth yawning
- Stress and over-work.

Recommendations

- Slice all food thinly
- Do not bite into large pieces of food
- Chew slowly and avoid noises if possible
- Take longer over eating – take smaller mouthfuls
- Support chin during yawning
- 8 hours sleep, 8 hours work and 8 hours rest!
- Eat a soft diet.

Any tooth clenching or grinding habit must be identified and eliminated. Many people clench and grind their teeth as a response to stress and may not be aware of it. This may be due to concentrating on a particular task, keeping unrealistic timetables and generally trying to do too much. This is similar to what is described as tension headaches, but affecting the muscles of the face rather than the neck and the back of the head.

Exercises

Use this simple exercise twice a day, and it will help your jaw work in its most comfortable position. Choose a time when you are generally comfortable and relaxed.

1) Curl your tongue backwards, so that the tip touches the roof of your mouth towards the back (this holds your jaw backwards)

at the same time:

2) Place your hand under your chin and press your bottom jaw down on to it

- Keep your teeth just apart
- Keep your lips resting together
- Keep this posture up for one minute.

3 Then:

relax

Stop pressing

Relax your tongue by swallowing

Rest your teeth together for one minute.

4) Do it again.

Press for one minute

Relax for one minute

Five times.

Ten minutes at the beginning and end of each day is best.

Your discomfort should start to feel better after 1-2 weeks.