

BEGINNER EXERCISES FOR THE JAW

PRACTITIONER NOTES

In addition to the home exercise prescription you may wish to advise the patient who displays signs of excessive muscular activity (such as tongue scalloping from bruxism)¹⁵ of potential beneficial behavioural changes. These include:

- Emphasising that overuse of jaw muscles could be the cause of the patient's pain¹¹ (some evidence indicates that the myofascial pain of temporomandibular disorders is delayed-onset muscle soreness)¹²
- Avoiding excessive chewing habits¹¹ (such as chewing gum, finger nails, oral mucosa)¹³
- Explaining the relationship between chronic pain and psychosocial stress¹¹
- Avoiding excessive mandibular movements¹¹
- Keeping the muscles relaxed by holding the mandible in its postural position (teeth slightly apart).¹⁴ Placing the tongue on the floor of the mouth when tension is noted may also be beneficial¹⁶
- Following a soft diet¹¹

Management of temporomandibular joint disorders can involve complex diagnostic and treatment approaches and a multidisciplinary approach is often considered appropriate.¹⁷

Factors to consider include:

- Cervical spine# (for exercises refer to beginner and intermediate exercises for the neck)^{18,19}
- Hyperalgesia and/or allodynia¹⁹⁻²¹
- Headaches, migraine
- Stress/anxiety/depression²²⁻²⁴
- Psychosocial factors^{25,26}
- Fibromyalgia²⁷
- Altered breathing patterns²⁸
- Previous trauma (such as mandibular condyle fractures)
- Malocclusion
- Bruxism
- Musicians (wind instruments, violin, viola)^{29,30}
- Sleep deprivation³¹
- Internal derangement of the temporomandibular joint (disc displacement)
- Red flags (cardiac dysfunction, vertebrobasilar insufficiency, temporal arteritis, trigeminal neuralgia, head and neck tumours and deep facial infections)

Other treatment options include:

- Occlusion correction with the use of intraoral appliances^{10,38,39}
- Orthodontics¹⁰
- Acupuncture⁴⁰
- Joint mobilisation/manipulation⁴¹⁻⁴⁴
- Botulinum toxin injection⁴⁵
- Electrotherapy
- Relaxation training⁴⁶
- Biofeedback
- Behavioural change⁴⁷
- Dry needling²⁷
- Ultrasonic therapy⁴⁸
- Postural training* (for exercises refer to beginner and intermediate exercises for the upper back)⁴⁹