

Temporomandibular Joint & Muscle Disorder (TMJ) hurts.

...Badly!

What's TMJ?

Simply put, TMJ occurs when the joint, the muscles and the teeth are not working in harmony. This disharmony results in a number of symptoms that can markedly affect one's quality of life (intense jaw pain, chronic headaches and limited speaking and chewing, to name a few.)

TMJ affects millions of Americans - especially those with otherwise high-energy lives.

Unfortunatly for most sufferers, TMJ is poorly understood. It's so poorly understood that it's one of the more widely misdiagnosed (and, for that matter, improperly treated) conditions in modern medicine.

We're proven specialists.

Downtown is ground zero for TMJ, and Downtown Dental has been here for almost twenty years. Our downtown neighbors work an average of more than 40 hours per week and shoulder most of the responsibilities in the household. As a result, we've seen thousands of TMJ cases. We've been able to help folks who thought that constant headaches and jaw pain were going to be a fact of life forever.

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COSMETIC, TMJ, SLEEP APNEA,
& GENERAL DENTISTRY

*Voted Best Downtown Dentist 4 Years in a Row!**
*(*by readers of Los Angeles Downtown News)*

Some Of Our Services

- Cosmetic Dentistry ◀
- Periodontal Disease Treatment ◀
- Invisalign® ◀
- Smile Restoration & Enhancement ◀
- Orthodontics ◀
- TMJ Treatment ◀
- Sleep Apnea Solutions ◀

Location

Finding Downtown Dental is a breeze. Our office is a quick walk from MOCA, The Walt Disney Concert Hall and California Plaza. If you drive, we'll validate your in-building parking.

*Think you'll never
be rid of TMJ?*

Think Again!



Make An Appointment Today.

We Can Help!

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Isn't It Just Stress That's Causing My TMJ?

Downtown Dental focuses on the whole-body health of our patients, so we're very familiar with the many ways that TMJ affects (and are affected by) scores of other factors in a patient's life.

There's no doubt that stress is a major factor in intensifying the symptoms of TMJ. Contrary to what most people believe, however, it isn't the primary cause of the disorder. The primary cause is actually a set of reflexes, triggered by an improper bite (malocclusion), which cause muscle spasms in the jaw, neck and face. In short, stress worsens the effects of a bite problem that already existed. In a small percentage of patients, there's even a neurological factor involved (such as Trigeminal Neurologia, or another neurological disorder).

To give you an idea of TMJ's systemic nature, take a look at this partial list of potential causes and contributing factors:

- ▶ Stress-related clenching or grinding of the teeth, especially during sleep
- ▶ Jaw injuries
- ▶ Arthritis
- ▶ Old dental procedures
- ▶ Hereditary factors
- ▶ Neurological factors

You know that TMJ causes jaw pain, but check out these other symptoms, too. Some of them may surprise you!

- ▶ Tooth sensitivity (or toothaches)
- ▶ Neck and shoulder pain
- ▶ Crowns/cosmetic veneers that constantly come off of the teeth
- ▶ Tension headaches misdiagnosed as migraines
- ▶ Mobile teeth
- ▶ Locking or "popping" of the jaw
- ▶ Pain or stiffness when chewing
- ▶ A "cheese grater" sensation when opening or closing the mouth
- ▶ Gaps between the teeth getting wider
- ▶ Tinnitus (ringing in the ears)
- ▶ Earache

If It's That Complicated,

How Can I Get Properly Diagnosed?

If that list of potential causes and symptoms sounds baffling, it's because it is. Properly diagnosing TMJ takes loads of experience. After all, there's no standard test to correctly identify all TMJ conditions.

First Steps

We start with a thorough evaluation of each patient's individual list of symptoms, as well as a detailed medical history and a physical examination of the head, neck, face and jaw. Just as an architect wouldn't build a house without seeing a survey of the land, we can't move forward confidently without excellent information about your individual physiology and symptoms.

Appliance Therapy

After diagnosis, the first step in this process is to custom-fit you with one (or a combination) of several noninvasive TMJ appliances. We adjust the appliance(s) meticulously over the course of several appointments so that your teeth come together on the device in the perfect bite position for your mouth. (As we learned previously, the root cause of TMJ is an improper bite. Therefore, these symptoms are effectively neutralized while you wear the device.)

Bite Reconstruction

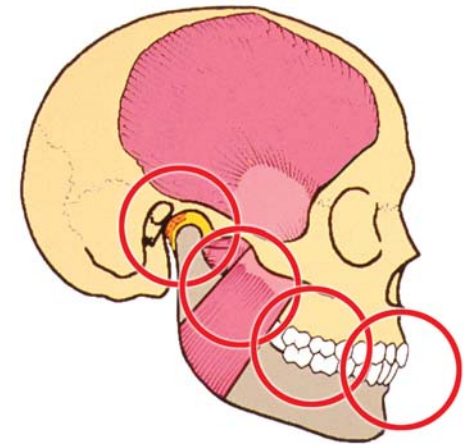
As soon as we find and confirm that "sweet spot" with the appliance, we marry that knowledge to what we've learned from the "surveys" we took earlier. Armed with that information, we're able to develop a personalized treatment plan to get to the root of the problem. Some patients' TMJ is managed effectively with appliance therapy indefinitely but, in many cases, appropriate treatment involves reconstructing the bite.

In treatment-responsive patients (those without a neurological factor), reconstructing the bite controls symptoms to a manageable point. We reconstruct the bite to an ideal occlusion by using the least-invasive combination of methods for your specific case (among them Invisalign®, groups of crowns, onlays, veneers, etcetera).

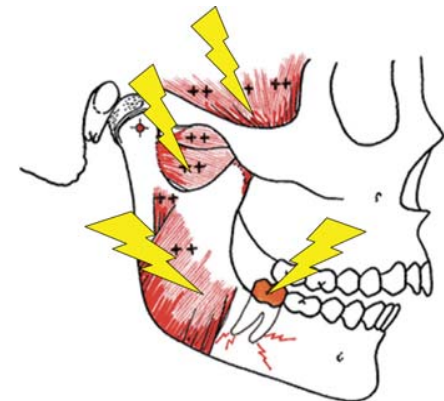
It doesn't happen overnight, but - once we achieve an ideal bite - eliminating TMJ symptoms is almost a certainty. If there's no neurological factor involved, we'll have met our goal of addressing and managing (in many cases, eliminating) the root problems that cause your individual experience of TMJ. As an added bonus, you're left with a brand-new, stunning smile.

Over-The-Counter Nightguards

Considering a drugstore nightguard (mouthguard) instead? Unfortunately, it won't help. Over-the-counter nightguards are set to a standard bite that will not be correct for your unique physiology.



The jaw's many parts must work together.



A jaw in disharmony can cause severe pain.

(Illustrations courtesy of the Dawson Academy)

There's Hope!

You may have heard that there isn't an effective treatment for TMJ - that you'll have to "live with it" until it mysteriously goes away on its own. You'll be entirely relieved to hear that this is not the case. We've successfully treated thousands of cases at Downtown Dental. In fact, we've been perfecting bites and managing TMJ for 20 years.

At the same time, TMJ does not like to be ignored. If left untreated, it's not going to magically disappear; it's only going to get progressively worse. Over the years, teeth begin to break, existing gum disease worsens, and there's the potential for joint damage severe enough to require painful surgeries. Do yourself a favor - don't let it get to that point! Call us. We can help.