Lewes High Street

DENTAL PRACTICE

EXERCISES TO IMPROVE FUNCTION OF THE TMJ AND MUSCLES OF MASTICATION

The purpose of this exercise is to prevent clicking and to strengthen the muscles which pull the joint backwards. This in turn will relax the muscles which close the jaw and will prevent the jaw pulling forward to one side. The jaw joint will act as a hinge and this will take the strain of it.

Set aside two 5-minute periods per day when you are relaxed.

> Close your mouth on your back teeth, resting the tip of your tongue on your palate just behind your upper front teeth.
> Keeping your teeth together run the tip of your tongue backwards onto the soft palate as far as it will go.
> Slowly open your mouth until you feel your tongue being pulled away from it, do not try to open it further. Keep in this position for 5 seconds. Still don't open your mouth further. Then close and relax for 5 seconds.
> Repeat this process for 5 minutes.

As you open you should feel tension in the muscles at the back of your jaw beneath your chin. For the first few times you should check that there is no deviation in your teeth from side to side as you open. If the exercise is being carried out correctly there should be no clicks or noise. If there is you are making a mistake.

Do this exercise no more than the recommended 5 minutes twice a day for the first week. Initially it may seem to make your pain worse, but this will be a result of the unaccustomed exercise. Thereafter, do the exercise as often as you can and this will help to strengthen the ligaments around your jaw joints and rest the muscles which close your mouth.

If the exercise is carried out correctly and regularly over a three week period you will retrain your muscles so that your jaw opens and closes smoothly without clicks or jerks and your pain should subside.

Also remember the following advice which should help ease the problem:

- Never bite your fingernails.
- Never bite your lower lip.
- Avoid biting on your front teeth.
- Keep your upper and lower teeth apart when they are at rest.