



TMJ Disorder Resource Guide

What is Temporomandibular Joint Disorder and How Does it Relate to Myofunctional Therapy?

The Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) is a complex joint on both sides of the head that connects the lower jaw to the skull. This joint functions as a sliding hinge and moves as a single unit. The TMJ is able to move horizontally, laterally and vertically. This ability to move in multiple directions assist in completing functional skills such as sucking, chewing, swallowing, speaking and maintaining the resting positions of the jaw, lips and tongue.

Temporomandibular Joint Disorder is defined as misalignment or inflammation of the temporomandibular joints. These disorders are complex issues that are relating to the TMJ. Dysfunction of the TMJs may be a result of clenching or grinding due to airway issues, imbalanced muscle patterns, incorrect oral resting posture, medications, injury, genetics, skeletal issues and/or malocclusion. Disorders of the TMJ may be a result of an issue with the TMJ disc or muscular in etiology.

Signs and symptoms that the TMJ is not functioning as intended include clicking, popping, crepitus, clinching, grinding, jaw instability, chipped teeth, the jaw becoming locked in an open or closed position, overdevelopment of facial muscles, pain in muscles of the neck, referred pain to the ear, pain with chewing, and headaches.

Treatment of TMJD is complex and may require the collaboration of multiple medical specialists. This may include a primary care provider, dentist, orthodontist, orofacial myologist, ENT, chiropractor, oral maxillofacial surgeon, or physical therapist.

In individuals with a temporomandibular disorder (TMD), the percentage of those with orofacial myofunctional variables is estimated to be 97.92% (Ferreira, Da Silva, & de Felicio, 2009). A myofunctional therapist can evaluate and treat the function and balance of the orofacial musculature while closely collaborating with a provider specializing in TMJD.

If you are experiencing discomfort or dysfunction of the TMJ, reach out to us today to see if a myofunctional evaluation is appropriate for you!

References

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