

Jaw Exercises



Dr. Ho

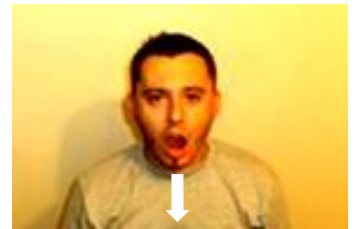
These exercises may be helpful in patients with temporomandibular joint (TMJ) and other jaw problems, including strains and spasms of the muscles that move the jaw.

Phase 1 Exercises

In addition to ice or cold packs applied 20 minutes on, 30 minutes off, start with these gentler exercises when you are in a higher level of pain and stiffness. While performing these exercises, keep your neck neutral and try to only move your jaw. As your symptoms improve, you should move on to the Phase 2 exercises.

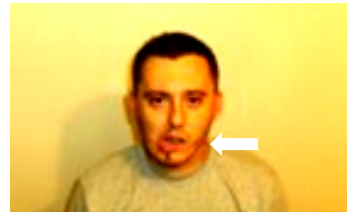
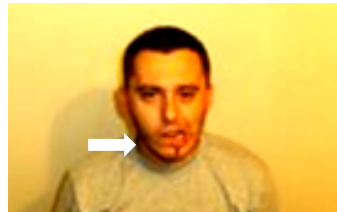
JAW OPENING

- While looking in a mirror, slowly open your jaw as far as you can, and watch for any deviation of the lower jaw from the center.
- Try to open the jaw as evenly as possible, avoiding any shifting to either side.
- Hold the maximally opened position for 3 seconds, then slowly close the jaw.
- Do at least 3 sets of 5 repetitions a day.



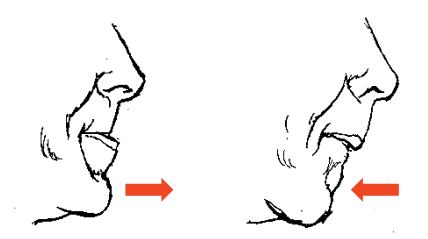
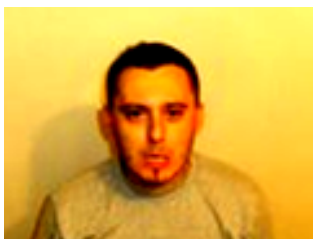
LATERAL JAW DEVIATION

- Open your mouth wide enough to separate the teeth by a half an inch, then slowly thrust your jaw to the left as far as it can go.
- Hold this position for 3 seconds, then slowly return to the neutral position.
- Repeat on the right.
- Do at least 3 sets of 5 repetitions a day.



JAW PROTRUSION AND RETRUSION (RETRACTION)

- Open your mouth wide enough to separate the teeth by half an inch.
- Slowly thrust your jaw forward into a "gorilla" pose (keep your head neutral and only thrust the jaw).
- Hold this position for 3 seconds.
- Slowly pull the jaw back (towards the back of your neck) as far as it can go.
- Hold this position for 3 seconds.
- Slowly return to the neutral position.
- Do at least 3 sets of 5 repetitions a day.



*If you have any problems or questions,
please call your doctor's office (8am-5pm).*

Answering service for after hours.

8270 WILLOW OAKS CORPORATE
DRIVE, SUITE 700
FAIRFAX, VA 22031
P 703.810.5228 | F 571.407.5659
ORTHOVIRGINIA.COM

Phase 2 Exercises

In addition to the exercises in Phase 1, start these exercises once you have gained more motion from the previous exercises. These exercises use “reciprocal-inhibition,” where one contracts the muscles opposite of the ones that are being stretched. Again, keep your neck neutral and try to only move your jaw while performing these exercises. Also, you may add heat or warm compresses before doing these exercises at this point.

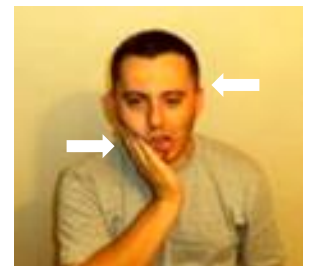
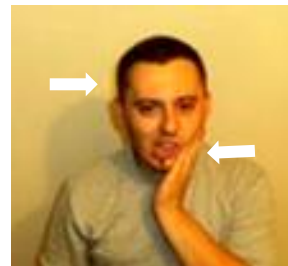
JAW OPENING

- Open your mouth wide enough to place the knuckle of one finger in your mouth. Carefully, gently bite down with a very mild force, being careful not to hurt yourself.
- Hold for 3-5 seconds.
- Open your mouth to half-way, putting 2 knuckles into your mouth.
- Gently bite down carefully, holding for 3-5 seconds.
- Open your mouth further and try to place 3 knuckles into the mouth, gently biting and holding as before.
- Do at least 2 sets of 2-3 repetitions a day.



LATERAL JAW DEVIATION

- Start with your mouth closed in a neutral position. Place your left hand against the left side of your chin and push your jaw into it isometrically (i.e. do not let your chin move, just contract the muscles).
- Hold this for 3-5 seconds.
- Relax, and slowly thrust and stretch your jaw to the right as far as it can go.
- Hold this stretch for 5-10 seconds, then relax.
- Push into your hand the opposite way (now the right side of your chin against your right hand) again isometrically, holding this position for 3-5 seconds.
- Then, relax and slowly thrust and stretch your jaw to the left as far as it can go, and hold this stretch for 5-10 seconds, then relax.
- Do at least 3 sets of 3 repetitions a day.



(continued)

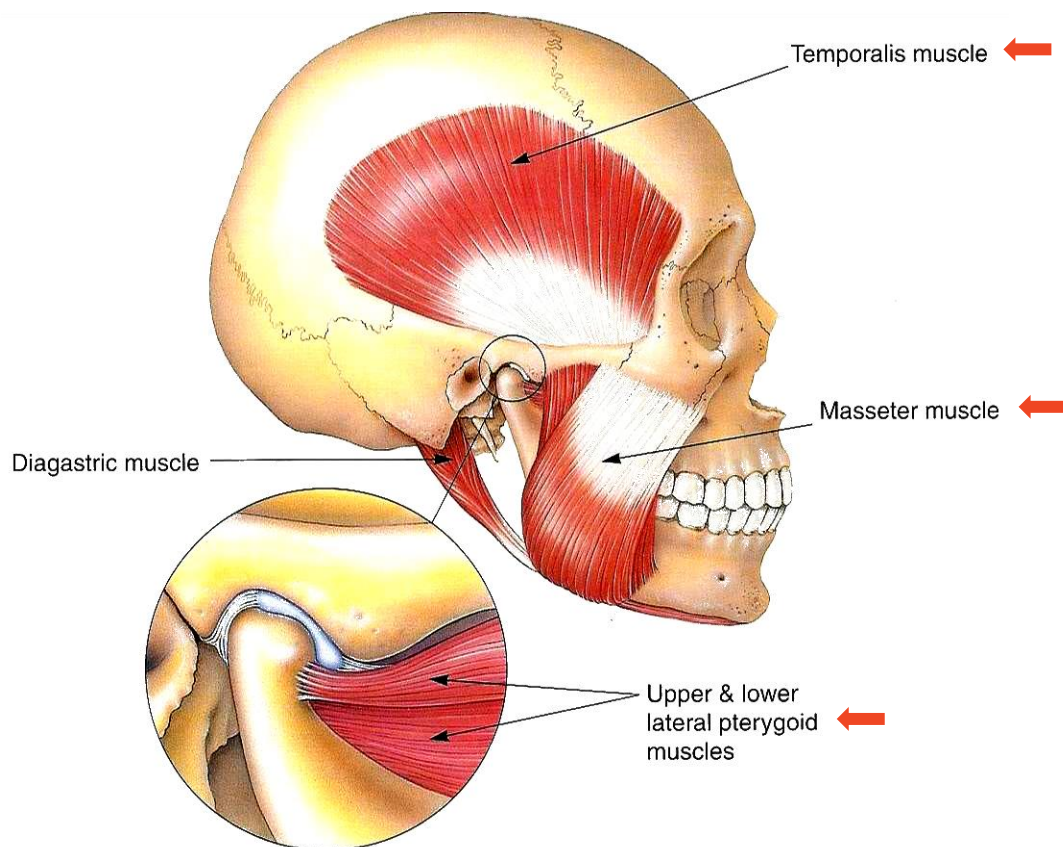
Massage Exercises

There are three main muscle groups involved in most TMJ and other jaw problems – the temporalis muscle, the masseter muscle, and the pterygoid muscles. Massaging these three muscle groups, together with the exercises above, may help in relieving tension and muscle spasm.

The **temporalis muscle** is easily located on the side of the head. Massage and stroke this muscle while slightly opening and closing the mouth.

The **masseter muscle** is located on the side of your jaw. Placing your thumb inside the mouth, gently squeeze, stroke, and kneed this muscle between your thumb and the other fingers.

The **pterygoid muscles** are more difficult to reach; slide the tip of your index finger, pad facing outwards, between the upper teeth and the cheek, as far back as you can. You will reach a little pocket called the pterygoid recess. Gently massage the muscle, pressing outwards while slowly moving the jaw.



Author: Garry W.K. Ho, M.D., CAQSM, September 2009

Adapted from “Jaw Exercises,” by Allan Kalamir, BSc, MChiro