

Orientation Information Prior To Your TMJ Assessment Appointment

This article will introduce you to our approach in assessing and treating TMJ disorders. TMJ is an acronym for temporomandibular joint, which are hinge-like and connect the lower jaw (mandible) to the upper jaw (maxilla). The correct term for most TMJ disorders is TMJ Dysfunction, or “TMD,” but is commonly called “TMJ” by most people, including dentists. Disorders of this joint can be recognized by several symptoms and signs such as: migraine and contraction headaches; facial pain; neck discomfort; jaw joint noise and/or pain; restricted and painful jaw movements; jaw locking open or closed; accelerated tooth wear; vertigo (sense of movement – person or environment); tinnitus (ringing in ears); and quite often associated with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).

TMJ Dysfunction may be brought on by many factors, such as a blow to the head, whiplash, systemic conditions such as osteo or rheumatoid arthritis, and most commonly, a mismatch between the way the upper and lower teeth fit together (occlusion). The TMJ’s have many surrounding and connecting elements such as muscles, ligaments and nerves that also serve the face, head and neck. Therefore, if the TMJ’s are mal-positioned due to a mismatch between the upper and lower teeth, they will subsequently be out of their normal positions, which can be damaging and painful to them and their surrounding elements resulting in any one or a combination of the above symptoms.

Key to diagnosing this condition is a thorough history of one’s past experience with it. Therefore, filling out the accompanying form will assist the doctor during your TMJ assessment appointment. If it is determined that you have TMD, most often a CT (Computerized Tomography) scan will need to be taken to determine the positioning of the joint elements and whether they are damaged. Other assessment modalities might include fabricating mouth models and placing them accurately on a jaw simulator that can mimic the mal-positioning of the teeth and TMJ’s.

Treatment often includes a process that allows the TMJ’s to assume healthy positions within their sockets through the wearing of a clear orthotic known as a MAGO (Maxillary Anterior Guided Orthotic), with periodic adjustments to keep up with the healthy TMJ changes as they are occurring. For a more complete understanding of the entire process, it is highly recommended that you access our website home page www.longbeachholisticdentist.com and click on the Resources link and download or read the article entitled “Bioesthetics, Oral Beauty, Function and Temporomandibular Dysfunction (“TMJ”).”