

# AVOIDANCE THERAPY

## HOME CARE

### o CLICKING AVOIDANCE

Once a disc is out of place it cannot be put back. Therefore, first and most important is avoidance of the clicking by limiting the opening of the jaw. Avoidance will allow the disc to adapt to its new position and reduce the chances of getting arthritis in the joint in the future. Fortunately, the jaw can hinge open two fingers width (25mm) without sliding forward. It is critical that you must not slide forward or side-to-side.

- Hinge of motion without protrusion (limited jaw opening): put both hands over your jaw joints and feel whether your joints are sliding forward while opening part way. Your mouth opening should be limited to the amount before the forward position.
- Avoid clicking while talking or singing
- Avoid clicking while eating
  - Have soft foods and cut food into small pieces.
  - If you have one sided click, it may be possible to chew median to hard food in one area of the mouth (often on the same side as the click) without inducing a jaw click
- Monitor how successful you are: Keep track in a diary of how many times per day your joint clicks

### o CLENCHING AVOIDANCE

Many patients are not aware that they put their teeth together during the day. This is not good, since it allows you to generate additional contractions in the jaw muscles. When you do this, you compromise or reduce blood flow in the jaw muscles. You should consciously avoid all tooth contact (unless eating) during the day.

- No tooth contact except when eating:
  - Use timer to remind you every 30 minutes to keep your teeth apart.
  - Place stickers in different locations that you pass during the day (walls, desk, phone, car, refrigerator, etc). Every time you see the stickers remember that your teeth should be apart

○ **REDUCED JAW FUNCTION**

As mentioned in click avoidance, you need to avoid all hard foods (e.g. tough breads, hard meat) and any chewy food (e.g. gum, salad). Hard foods delay the healing process. A soft diet will allow your chewing muscles to rest. Chewy foods produce a repetitive rubbing of the joint surfaces together. If they are damaged, they never have a chance to heal and repair. It is similar to typing several hours with a sore wrist; it may not hurt much while you are doing it, but it will hurt later. The injured joint has a better chance of healing with a strict program of reduced function.

- Avoid hard/chewy food: Limit foods to those that do not aggravate the pain, this does not mean eat foods with low nutritional value (high in sugar and fat low in protein)
- Cut foods into small pieces: one way to achieving a good soft diet program can be by simply cutting your food into small pieces.
- Avoid talking, singing, laughing: Limit talking and use of the jaw during the initial treatment period (usually 3-4 weeks)

○ **HABIT AVOIDANCE**

- Do NOT bite your nails
- Do NOT chew your cheeks or lips
- Do NOT chew ice cubes
- Do NOT bite on pens or pencils

○ **OPENING WIDE AVOIDANCE**

- Hold your chin up when yawning and tip your head forward.
- Cut food into small pieces

○ **PROLONGED DENTAL APPOINTMENT AVOIDANCE**

When you go to the dental office, make sure you tell the dentist or hygienist about your jaw problems and ask if they have a bite block they can give you to help support your jaw when it is open. Next it is critical to ask that they only work for short periods and give you the opportunity to close your mouth regularly during the appointment.

- Use bite block
- Ask for short dental appointments
- Rest your jaw regularly during dental work