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Management of Acute TMJ Pain Relief

Acute TMJ (temporomandibular joint) Disorder occurs when the muscles that move your jaw do not work together correctly. They may become tired and cramped, causing pain in the face, neck and head. Possible causes may be related to stress, grinding or clenching of teeth, trauma to the jaw and osteoarthritis.

Self Care:

Do's:

- Sleep on your back to reduce jaw strain.
- Several times a day, gently massage the affected muscles with your fingers.
- Maintain good posture - Do not cradle a telephone in your neck.
- Manage stress - Use relaxation techniques to prevent unproductive tension.
- Eat soft foods - Try using both sides of your mouth when chewing
- Keep teeth in the resting position - "Lips together, teeth apart."

Don'ts:

- Do not chew gum or bite your fingernails.
- Avoid protruding your lower jaw forward.
- Limit mouth opening to a thumb's thickness when yawning, laughing and coughing.
- Avoid extreme jaw movements that may cause clicking, popping or grinding sounds.
- Avoid hard, crunchy, sticky foods. Do not eat foods that require prolonged chewing or require you to open your mouth wide (hard crusty breads, bagels, tough meats).

Moist, Warm Heat:

For the first 24-48 hours, apply moist heat using a warm damp washcloth. Place over the affected side of the face for 15 minutes. Apply at least 4 times throughout the day to continue to help decrease the pain and stiffness.

Medication Therapy:

Please take the following medications as directed for pain and to help reduce muscle inflammation.

- Naproxen (Aleve): Take two 220 mg tablets to start then one tablet every 6-8 hours. Do not exceed 1250 mg a day.
- Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin): Take two 200 mg tablets 4 times a day. May be taken every 4 hours for breakthrough pain. Do not exceed 6 tablets in a 24-hour period. (Under a Doctor's direction only: may take up to 2.4 grams a day but for no more than 10 days).
- Aspirin (Bayer): Take 325 mg tablet every 4 hours. Do not exceed 12 tablets in a 24-hour period.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol): Take one 500 mg tablet every 6 hours. May be taken every 4 hours for breakthrough pain. Do not exceed 6 tablets in a 24-hour period.