



# Patient Information Leaflet

## TMJ Exercises

Cork University Dental  
School & Hospital



This leaflet has been designed to explain a jaw exercise that may help TMJ symptoms. There is a second leaflet which contains answers to many frequently asked questions about TMJ problems. Please ask for this leaflet, if you have not received it already. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer, or if you would like further information, please ask us.

### Instructions for relieving a painful jaw joint

1. Avoid biting on the front teeth.
2. Select soft food only while your jaw is painful.
3. Do all your chewing on the painful side, using the back teeth only.
4. Do the following exercise for two 5-minute periods each day.

Sit in a comfortable chair in front of a mirror with the back teeth resting together and relax. The tip of your tongue will be resting just behind your front teeth. Now slowly curl the tongue backwards so that you feel it running over the hard palate and then against the soft palate. Continue to push the tongue back as hard as you can, keeping it in contact with the soft palate and then slowly open your mouth. Check in the mirror that you are opening your mouth vertically and not deviating to one side. Most people find that the tip of the tongue is pulled away from the palate as the mouth is opened wide. Do not allow this to happen. Hold this position of conflict for five seconds and then relax for five seconds and then repeat the exercise.

If the jaw joint clicks at any time during the exercise, this will mean that you are not doing it properly and so start again from the beginning.

The purpose of the exercise is to pull the jaw backwards as hard as possible and relax the muscles which pull the jaw forward. This takes strain off ligaments in the joints and allows them to heal.

Initially, you may find that there is no improvement and the pain may seem to get worse. Do not get discouraged. After the first week, do the exercise for many short periods each day and a gradual improvement should follow.

This leaflet is available online at <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dentalschool/patients>