

Maxillofacial Department

Exercise to improve the function of the jaw joints and reduce associated facial pain

The aim of this exercise is to prevent any clicking of the temporomandibular joints (jaw joints) and to strengthen the muscles which pull your jaw backwards.

It will relax the muscles which pull the jaw forwards and from side to side as the jaw opens, and this should take some strain off the joints and reduce any pain you have been experiencing.

Set aside 5 minute periods twice a day, at times when you can be by yourself and relaxed. Perhaps you can shut yourself away in the bathroom or bedroom. Preferably sit upright in a chair, and carry out these exercises.

1. Close your mouth gently on your back teeth, resting the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth just behind your upper front teeth.
2. Run the tip of your tongue backwards onto the soft palate, as far back as it will go, keeping your teeth just together.
3. Force your tongue backwards to keep it in contact with the soft palate, and slowly open your mouth until you begin to feel your tongue just being pulled away from your soft palate. Do not try to open your mouth further; just keep it in this position for five seconds. Repeat this exercise over the next five minutes.

As you open your mouth, you should feel tension in the muscles at the back of your jaw and under your chin. For the first few times that you do the exercise, you should check in a mirror that you are opening your jaw straight (the lower teeth should move vertically downwards with no movement from side to side as you open your mouth).



Patient Information

When doing this exercise you should not open your mouth wider than the width of your own thumb between the front teeth

If you are doing the exercise correctly, there should be no clicks or noises from the joints. If there is, you may not be doing exercise correctly – re-read the instructions, and try again.

For the first week, we suggest that you do the exercise no more than the recommended amount. Initially, it may make the pain worse because some of the muscles are not used to the exercise, but this should wear off soon.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6500 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

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