

REMEDIAL JAW EXERCISES

REFLEX OPENING EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to produce a reflex relaxation of the jaw muscles so temporarily decreasing the load transmitted to the jaw joint.

Place the hand under the point of the chin and open the mouth until the teeth are just apart. Maintain firm opening pressure against hand resistance and hold the position for a period of 30-40 seconds or until the jaw opening muscles feel tired. When this point is reached, remove the hand from under the chin and swallow quickly in order to relax the jaw.

Immediately following this, place a finger of each hand just in front of the ear to support the jaw joint and allow the jaw to open smoothly and widely, avoiding any swing to the right or left (check in a mirror). Remove fingers from each side and close the mouth to complete the exercise.

This manoeuvre should be repeated five or six times at a sitting and the series repeated two or three times a day, depending on the severity of the symptoms. It is useful to carry out the exercise at periods when the jaw is particularly painful, for example, after meals.

LATERAL OPENING EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to increase mobility of the joints where jaw opening is restricted. **It is only to be used when there is significant limitation of normal opening.**

Support first of all the left jaw joint with two fingers of the left hand placed just in front of the left ear and place the right hand against the side of the right jaw. Move the point of the jaw towards the right side against the resistance of the right hand, maintaining support with the fingers of the left hand over the left jaw joint. When maximum movement to the side has been achieved, ease the jaw slowly back into the central position. The exercise should then be repeated on the opposite side, reversing the above movements.

NOTE

These exercises are only prescribed for painful jaw joint dysfunction. **This is not a disease.** It is caused by uncoordinated movement and temporary overload with associated muscle spasm and will in most cases get better with simple exercises such as these.

EXERCISE TO PREVENT CLICKING OF THE JAW JOINT

The exercise should be carried out sitting in an erect posture in front of a mirror; it should be done at least twice daily in this position until the art of contracting the muscle beneath the chin has been completely mastered

1. Clasp both hands behind the nape of the neck to provide a "headrest".
2. With the mouth closed and the teeth lightly touching, contract the muscle beneath the chin, attempting to pull the chin back into the neck without opening the mouth. By observing the chin and neck in the mirror it is possible to see the actual contractions of these suprahyoid muscles.
3. It is essential not to move the chin or teeth when doing this exercise. Once the art of the muscle contraction is learned it should be done for 3-5 minutes each hour, not necessarily sitting, or in front of a mirror.
4. With practice a definite sensation of tension will be noted in the suprahyoid muscles and in the region of the jaw joints.
5. Once the essential exercise has been learned it can be done with small mouth opening movements, learning to open the jaw with a backward pull, and thus avoiding the "click". Day by day the extent of mouth opening is increased always with the jaw positively retruded.
6. Gradually increase the extent of mouth opening until it can be opened to the full normal extent without producing a "click" - always keep the suprahyoid muscles retracted.

REMEMBER Muscles can be coaxed, but not driven; if you keep practising this exercise for 2 – 3 weeks it will become second nature and the click will not return.

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