

Post Holiday Headaches

a real bite

by: Dr. Bruce Bosler

Most people don't realize that their bite can be a primary cause of pain and dysfunction.

Finding Relief

Judy suffered from daily headaches for years. They became worse around the holidays and during times of emotional stress. At first, she thought it was her eyes; then she thought it might be her sinuses. Her physician eventually referred her to a neurologist for tests which all came back fine. She began taking medication, which didn't really help much. She had gradually become resigned to living with the pain.

During a routine dental check-up, she revealed to her dentist her history of headaches only after he asked about it. After all, who would think to mention headaches to their dentist?

Today Judy is free from headache pain without using medication. She wears a simple plastic dental appliance that balances her bite and relaxes her facial muscles. Judy claims it has made all the difference in her life.

Do you have headaches or pain in your face, jaw or teeth? Do you have trouble chewing? Does your jaw make clicking or popping noises? These symptoms can be caused by temporomandiblar disorders (TMD). This term describes a group of problems related to the temporalmandibular joint and nearby muscles. Your symptoms may be painful and frustrating. But don't worry. Your dentist can help you treat TMD and prevent future problems.

TMD causes many kinds of symptoms:

- Headaches
- Jaw joint pain
- Jaw joint clicking
- Limited mouth opening
- Ear congestion
- Dizziness

- Ringing in the ears
- Difficulty swallowing
- Loose Teeth
- Clenching and Grinding
- Facial Pain
- Sensitive Teeth
- Neck Pain
- Tingling of the fingertips
- Hot and cold sensitivity of the teeth
- Nervousness or insomnia

The TMJ is a ball-and-socket joint located where the upper and lower jaws meet. You have one joint on each side of your mouth. These joints are part of a large group of muscles, ligaments and bones that work together as a system.

You can feel this joint in action. Place your fingers over each side of your face in front of your ears, then open and close your mouth – you will feel the joint working.

TMD Treatment

If you grind your teeth or if you have a bad bite your dentist may be able to help. If your bite needs adjustment, you may be referred to an orthodontist.

If you grind your teeth, you may be given a splint. This is an appliance that fits in the mouth. It may also be called an orthotic or night guard. There are different kinds of splints for different kinds of needs. A splint can keep the upper and lower teeth apart. This helps protect tooth surfaces from grinding. A splint can also be made to reduce strain on the area.



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If your bite is incorrect, this means your jaws or teeth are out of alignment. Orthodontic treatment (braces) may help. If your bad bite is due to missing or damaged teeth, you may receive restorative treatment, such as a crown, bridge or dental implant.

Managing Stress

Stress is a key factor in TMD. Stress can cause you to clench your muscles or grind your teeth. It can also affect your sleep, reducing your body's ability to heal. Here are a few tips to manage stress:

- Learn ways to relax. Try listening to music or gently stretching. Take a few slow, deep breaths or close your eyes and imagine a place or object that is calming.
- Get plenty of rest or sleep.
- Set goals you know you can attain.
- Make time for people and things you enjoy.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Stay active. Try walking, stretching and yoga.

What Can I Do?

If you are having TMD symptoms, don't wait. Call your general dentist or doctor right away. You don't have to live with pain or discomfort. TMD can be treated. ■

This article was written by Dr. Bruce Bosler. He is trained in the neuromuscular principles of treating TMD both orthodontically and restoratively. His practice is located at 301 Alamo Dr., Suite A-2 in Vacaville. He can be reached at 707-449-3661.



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