TMJ Problems
(Temporal Mandibular Joint Dysfunction)

TMJ dysfunction means there are problems with the joint between your jaw and your skull. This is a joint lined by cartilage like other joints in your body but also has a small disc in the joint which keeps the bones from rubbing on each other. These joints are like other joints and can get *inflamed* (sore) from arthritis and other problems. When this joint gets sore, it can cause headaches and pain in the jaw and the face.

CAUSES
Usually the arthritic types of problems are caused by soreness in the joint. Soreness in the joint can also be caused by overuse. This may come from grinding your teeth. It may also come from mis-alignment in the joint.

DIAGNOSIS (LEARNING WHAT IS WRONG)
Diagnosis of this condition can often be made by history and exam. Sometimes your caregiver may need X-rays or an MRI scan to determine the exact cause. It may be necessary to see your dentist to determine if your teeth and jaws are lined up correctly.

TREATMENT
Most of the time this problem is not serious; however, sometimes it can persist (become chronic). When this happens medications that will cut down on *inflammation* (soreness) help. Sometimes a shot of cortisone into the joint will be helpful. If your teeth are not aligned it may help for your dentist to make a splint for your mouth that can help this problem. If no physical problems can be found, the problem may come from tension. If tension is found to be the cause, biofeedback or relaxation techniques may be helpful.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS
- Later in the day, applications of ice packs may be helpful. Ice can be used in a plastic bag with a towel around it to prevent frostbite to skin. This may be used about every 2 hours for 20 to 30 minutes, as needed while awake, or as directed by your caregiver.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- If physical therapy was prescribed, follow your caregiver's directions.
- Wear mouth appliances as directed if they were given.

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