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Patient Instructions for Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction

- **Rest Joints:** It is important that the temporomandibular joints are rested in order to allow full recovery. It is difficult to completely limit jaw activity, but a liquid diet or a very soft diet will be helpful. Chewing gum should be completely eliminated.
- **Prevent Wide Uncontrolled Opening of the Jaw:** Yawning, coughing, and laughing are often accompanied by rapid, wide, and uncontrollable opening of the jaw. This will aggravate the temporomandibular joint and cause major discomfort. Placing your fist under your chin and holding the lower jaw in place can prevent this type of activity.
- **Heat Therapy:** A heating pad or hot water bottle applied directly to both the left and right sides of the jaw in front of the ears will soothe and relax the muscles. This will help relieve any pain you experience. Both the heating pad and the water bottle techniques should be used at a warm temperature setting, not a hot setting.
- **Non-steroidal, Anti-inflammatory Medications:** Over the counter medications such as Ibuprofen and Tylenol can be taken to help some of the swelling subside. Please take the medication as directed.
- **Muscle Relaxant Medication:** Medications provided by your surgeon, such as Robaxin, Flexeril, or Soma, should be taken as prescribed. Unless directed otherwise by your doctor, do not take these medications on an empty stomach.
- **Mid-line Opening Exercises:** Draw a line down the middle of your upper and lower lips with an erasable pencil, then open and close the jaw while guiding it along the middle of the hinge axis. These exercises are used to retain the muscles and should be done two to three times each day for three to five minutes for each set of exercises.
- **Relief:** Do not expect immediate relief overnight. If the regimen of therapy provided is closely followed, you will see a definite improvement in your TMJ condition.
- **Concerns:** If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call the office at **(617) 364-5500**.