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TMJ AND MYOFASCIAL PAIN

Home care regimen for TMJ and myofascial pain patients

1. **Do not chew gum!** Chewing gum can make your jaw situation significantly worse, similar to running on a sprained ankle.
2. **Avoid clenching your teeth together:** Try to keep in mind during waking hours the phrase "Lips together, teeth apart."
3. **Avoid foods which require a lot of chewing:** This includes excessively hard or sticky foods.
4. **Application of ice:** You can use ice frozen in a dixie cup for five to ten minutes every few hours, or as needed. Apply to the areas of the jaw and face that have the pain.
5. **Beware of opening your mouth excessively wide:** This tends to stretch muscles and ligaments within the jaw joint beyond their capacity to heal. It is especially helpful to support the lower jaw with your fist underneath your chin while yawning.
6. **Limit the intake of sugar, caffeine and nicotine:** Sugar and caffeine are stimulants to the nervous system, which result in increased muscle activity. In most cases, we are trying to rest muscles in order to heal painful spasms. Nicotine causes blood sugar to rise, which again increases muscle activity.
7. **Sleeping on your back:** In order to sleep on your back, the natural curvature of the spine must be preserved. Place a pillow underneath your knees and either a small pillow or a rolled up towel underneath your neck for support.