
Do You Have TMJ?

Check for yourself.



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VILLANOVA
DENTAL STUDIO



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Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorder (also called TMD) can cause a host of problems, many of which are not obviously related to your teeth or jaw joint. Chronic pain, including unresolved headaches and progressive dental deterioration, are common in people who suffer from TMJ disorder. However, many signs and symptoms of TMD overlap with a multitude of other health conditions that may allow the disorder to go undiagnosed for years.

Ultimately, you'll need to see a dentist who is experienced in TMJ for a proper diagnosis, but here are some ways you can start checking yourself to decide if it's time to make an appointment:

Check Your Teeth

One of the more visible signs of potential TMJ disorder can be revealed simply by looking at your teeth. The following are some common dental issues that can be associated with TMJ disorder:

- Excessively worn, chipped, or shortened teeth
- Crooked, crowded, or missing teeth
- Misshapen or “bucked” teeth
- Failed fillings, crowns, and other restorations
- Teeth that are sensitive or loose
- Crumbling teeth or dental deterioration despite ongoing dental care



Consider your Posture

Poor posture can also be a cause, result, or sign of TMJ disorder. The following are some common posture issues associated with TMJ problems:

- Constantly slouching while sitting or standing
- Extending your head too far forward for prolonged periods
- Holding one shoulder higher than the other and tilting your head to compensate
- Locking your knees while standing for long periods



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Jaw Joint Issues

Since the temporomandibular joint is part of your jaw, your jaw joint itself is one of the most obvious indicators of TMJ disorder. Some of the more obvious signs of potential TMJ problems include:

- Clicking or popping sounds when you chew, yawn, or open your mouth
- Difficulty or pain when opening your mouth very wide
- Lockjaw
- Pain or tenderness in the jaw joint
- Constantly tired or sore jaw muscles
- Distinct overbite
- Problems or pain when eating hard-to-chew foods (dense/crusty breads, meats, etc.)

Headaches and Other Pain

In addition to pain in your jaw, TMJ disorder can also be associated with a number of other physical ailments and chronic pain issues that may go misdiagnosed for years. If you find these symptoms, you may be experiencing signs of TMD and be a candidate for treatment:

- Severe, debilitating migraines
- Chronic headaches
- Consistent neck aches and popping joints
- Shoulder and back pain, and stiffness
- Bouts of feeling dizzy or experiencing a sense of vertigo
- Tingling and numbness in your arms, hands, and fingers
- Distinct ringing in your ears
- Earaches and stuffy or clogged ears (commonly misdiagnosed as ear infection)



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How You Sleep – Ask Your Partner

TMJ misalignment or function is oftentimes unconscious and may be related to how you sleep. TMD can lead to problems in your sleep that you may not have identified, but your bedmate has probably noticed. These include:

- Chronic snoring
- Bruxing or clenching teeth throughout the night
- Grinding teeth
- Interrupted breathing or a diagnosis of sleep apnea
- Regularly waking up in the morning with sore or tired facial muscles



Professional Diagnosis

If you notice any or several of these symptoms, it probably makes sense to schedule an appointment with a professional who can conduct a more comprehensive evaluation and check for TMJ issues. Your evaluation will include a thorough analysis and may incorporate computer-aided technology to measure your jaw position, motion, and bite so the dentist can provide a more detailed and accurate diagnosis.

