

Failed appointments represent loss of valuable clinical time and a missed opportunity for another patient to see and orthodontist. It is prohibited to levy any charge for failed appointments in accordance with NHS regulations introduced by the Government on 1st April 2006. However, the regulations allow for treatment to be terminated following 3 missed appointments. Please do not place yourself in such a position, as it will most certainly lead to disappointment, an incomplete result and being unable to be offered NHS care in our practices in future. Rebooking of failed appointments will be done at the next available appointment time, which may not be the most convenient time for you. You should be aware that we may not be able to offer a convenient appointment for you for some time.

Please remember that the majority of our patients are at school and prefer appointments after school. This is obviously impossible from a practical point of view. It would therefore be helpful if you could bring your school timetable with you to enable us to choose an appointment at a convenient time.

If you are happy with your treatment here, why not tell your friends about us? Or post a review on [www.nhs.uk/dentist](http://www.nhs.uk/dentist) Patients do not need to be referred by a dentist; they can just give us a call and refer themselves.



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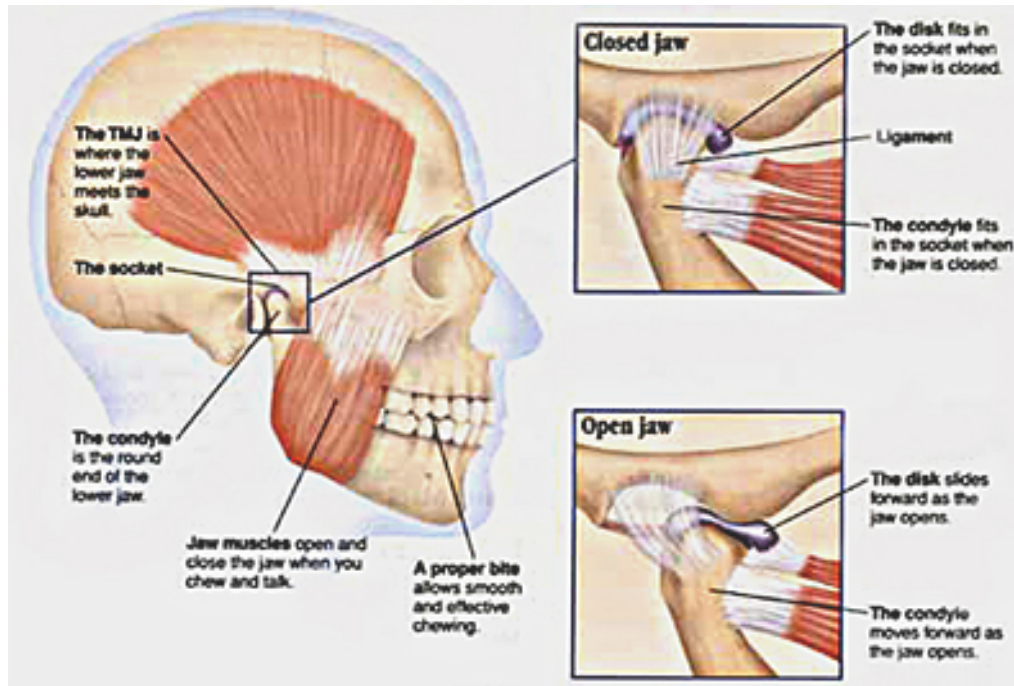


## TMJ Temporomandibular Joint

- Problems with the jaw are very common but typically only last a few months before getting better.
- In some instances only the muscles are affected (myofascial pain dysfunction) whereas in others the cartilages and ligaments may also be at fault (internal derangement of temporomandibular joint).
- The most common symptoms are:
  - Joint noise - such as clicking, cracking, crunching, grating or popping
  - Pain - usually a dull ache in and around the ear. The pain may radiate, i.e. move forwards along the cheekbone or downwards into the neck
  - Headache
  - Limited mouth opening
- Most jaw joint problems are made worse by chewing and are aggravated at time of stress

our quality is reflected in **your** smile

The temporomandibular joint (jaw joint) is located in front of the ear where the skull and the lower jaw meet. The joint allows the lower jaw (mandible) to move and function. The joint itself is made up of two bones that are separated by a disc of cartilage. Ligaments and muscles surround the joint.



### What causes jaw joint problems?

Pain is caused by the muscles in and around the jaw joint tightening up. Joint noise occurs if the disc of cartilage moves out of its normal position between the bones of the jaw joint. Most commonly the cartilage slips forwards and a noise is made when it returns to its normal position in between the bones of the jaw joint. The ligaments and muscles surrounding the joint can in turn go into spasm, producing pain and limited mouth opening.

### Why have I got jaw joint problems?

The cartilage in the jaw joint is thought to slip forwards because of over-use of the muscles surrounding the jaw. The over-use commonly produces tightening of the muscles and may occur as a result of chewing habits, such as grinding or clenching the teeth when under stress or at night. Nail biting or holding things between the teeth can also cause jaw joint problems. Less commonly missing back teeth, an uneven bite or an injury to the jaw can lead to the problem. Often no obvious cause is found.

### Are my problems anything to worry about?

Jaw joint problems are usually not serious and do not lead into other problems e.g. arthritis of the jaw joint. They are however a nuisance. Fortunately jaw joint problems usually respond to simple treatments.

### What are the treatments?

Treatment is aimed at trying to reduce the workload of the muscles so allowing the disc of cartilage to return to a normal position in the joint.

- A soft diet that requires little chewing - this allows over-worked muscles to rest
- Painkillers - e.g. warm water in a hot bot water bottle (avoid boiling water) wrapped in a towel applied to the side o the face.
- Identifying and stopping any habits, such as clenching or grinding. Remember that these may be 'subconscious', i.e. you may not be aware of them
- Relaxation therapy and learning techniques to control tension and stress
- Providing a clear plastic splint that fits over the teeth and is worn mainly at night. This helps support the joint and surrounding muscles
- Physiotherapy

### Are jaw joint problems anything to worry about?

It is important to realise that jaw joint problems, although a nuisance, are not sinister and usually respond to relatively simple measures over a period of time. Patients themselves can manage most of these treatments. Occasionally jaw joint problems may return after several years. It is very rare for jaw joint problems to progress to arthritis.