



I've been having pain in my jaw when I open my mouth lately... There's a weird clicking sound too, and I can't open my mouth wide...



It might be temporomandibular joint disorder, or TMJ disorder.

### Do you have any of these symptoms?

- You hear a clicking or popping sound when opening your mouth
- Your jaw hurts or feels tired when eating
- You feel pain when trying to open your mouth wide
- Your jaw feels stuck or catches when moving it side to side

Worried about TMJ disorder? Try this quick self-check.

Can you fit three of your fingers vertically into your mouth? If not, it may be a sign of temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJ).



### What causes temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJ)?

About 80% of TMJ disorders are said to be caused by clenching habits. Many people clench their teeth without even realizing it. Clenching often occurs during times of stress—whether it's positive or negative stress. Poor tooth alignment or bite (malocclusion) can also be a major factor. In addition, stress and harmful habits can increase the time spent clenching, which contributes to the development of TMJ disorder.

#### 【Stress Factors】



- When you're doing tasks that require focus
- When you're feeling tense or anxious
- When exerting force during sports or physical activity
- While sleeping (varies from person to person)



#### 【Bad Habits】

- Resting your chin on your hand (habitual cheek support)
- Chewing only on one side of your mouth
- Frequent smartphone use



### Are your teeth working the way they should?

#### Normal Bite Alignment:

At rest, your upper and lower teeth should not be touching. There is usually a natural gap of about 1 millimeter between them.

#### Tooth Contact Time:

It's said that the total time your teeth should be in contact in a day is about 20 minutes. Longer contact than this may increase the risk of developing TMJ disorder.



Even if it's just the thickness of a sheet of paper, it's normal to have a small gap between your teeth when your mouth is at rest!

### Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (TMJ) Caused by Dental Issues



#### Onset of TMJ Disorder

#### Do you have any of the following symptoms?

- You feel pain in your jaw while eating
- It has become difficult to open your mouth
- You hear uncomfortable sounds (clicking or popping) when chewing
- Your jaw sometimes dislocates or feels like it's slipping out of place

These symptoms may indicate a temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJ).

Most people don't even notice they're clenching or grinding their teeth until they start paying attention.

Clenching, in particular, often happens without us even realizing it—but it can have negative effects on the entire body as well.

#### Tooth Sensitivity

Tooth sensitivity can occur when excessive pressure is applied to the teeth, causing wear or erosion of the outermost layer, the enamel.

As the enamel wears down, the inner part of the tooth becomes exposed, bringing sensations closer to the nerve and resulting in sensitivity.



#### Shoulder and Neck Stiffness

Clenching your teeth can cause tension in the jaw and facial muscles, which may extend to the neck and shoulders—leading to neck stiffness and shoulder pain.



#### Headache

When muscle tension continues for an extended period, poor blood circulation can occur, which may lead to headaches.



#### Progression of Periodontal Disease

Jaw pain and discomfort while chewing can lead people to prefer softer foods that require less chewing. As a result, the amount of saliva produced tends to decrease.

When saliva is reduced, the risk of periodontal disease progression increases.

Additionally, when it becomes difficult to open the mouth fully, brushing properly becomes challenging.

This, too, can contribute to worsening of periodontal disease.



#### Fatigue

Teeth grinding and clenching can occur even during sleep, which lowers sleep quality and may result in feeling tired upon waking.

This can lead to a sense of fatigue or overall exhaustion.



### Self-Care You Can Do at Home

Become aware of clenching and set a personal rule to consciously stop it!

- ① Write "No Clenching" on a sticky note and place it somewhere you'll see it often.
- ② Whenever you notice the sticky note, check if you're clenching your teeth.
- ③ If you are, open your mouth slightly and relax your jaw.
- ④ Repeat steps ② and ③ regularly to build a habit of awareness and relaxation.

I'll stick a reminder note on my pen holder.

No Clenching



If you suspect temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJ)..



See a dentist for a diagnosis. They can tell you if you have temporomandibular disorder (TMD) and how severe it is.

How much have your teeth worn down?"

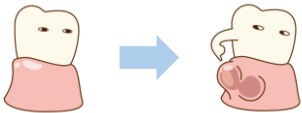
→ "The chewing surfaces of your upper and lower teeth have become flat



The chewing surfaces of your molars have grooves, right? If those grooves have become shallow or worn away, it means your teeth have been worn down."

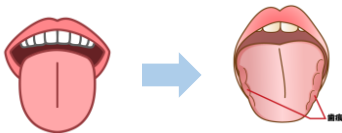
Is there a bony growth?"

→ "There is a bony bump in the center of the upper palate or on the inside of the lower jaw.



Excessive biting pressure can cause bony lumps to form. They may appear as if the gums have changed shape."

Teeth marks are visible along the edges of the tongue.



People who clench or grind their teeth may also have marks on their tongue.

"How strong is the pressure on the teeth when you grind or clench them?"



Adult men: average 60 kg  
Adult women: average 40 kg

During sleep, because it occurs unconsciously, biting force can be 5 to 10 times greater than when awake.

What treatment options are available?"

### ■ Night guard (mouthpiece for sleeping)

Wearing a mouthpiece can help distribute pressure on the teeth, preventing damage such as chipping or cracking of teeth, fillings, or crowns. It may also improve temporomandibular disorder (TMD) symptoms and reduce muscle tension. This is covered by insurance, although non-insurance-covered options are also available.



When we were kids, our parents might have said we slept with our mouths open, but as adults, many of us sleep while clenching our teeth.



When you get a night guard made, you may realize just how much you clench your teeth while sleeping. For some people, the night guard becomes worn down or even develops holes.

### ■ Self-massage

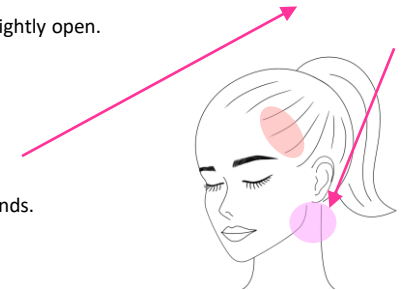
#### ① [Massage to loosen and relax the masseter muscle]

Place your thumb under your jaw and the rest of your fingers on the area of the jaw joint where you feel muscle tightness (just below the cheekbone, in front of the ear canal). Apply firm pressure and slowly make small circular motions for 30 seconds.

If you have difficulty locating the tight area, try doing this with your mouth slightly open. You may also use oil or cream while massaging.

#### ②[Massage to loosen tension in the temporalis muscle (head)]

Place your index, middle, and ring fingers on your temples. Apply slightly firm pressure and massage in slow circular motions for 30 seconds. Repeat in the opposite direction as well.



### Preventing temporomandibular disorder (TMD)



#### Keeping good posture

Poor posture puts unnecessary strain on the jaw."

#### Stay relaxed

Stress can sometimes cause unconscious teeth clenching. Be sure to make time for relaxation.

#### Bite check

When you go for regular dental checkups, have your bite alignment checked as well.

#### Don't rest your chin on your hand

Chin resting puts extra strain on your jaw, so it's best to avoid it.