

Heal Your Head, Neck and Jaw Pain at Home

Bruxism. Clenching. Soreness. Millions of people have been figuratively and literally gritting their teeth from additional stress of COVID-19 and new behaviors. Triggering pain issues like this are common, but not at this new level.

The National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) released a study in October 2020 entitled, “Temporomandibular Disorders and Bruxism Outbreak as a Possible Factor of Orofacial Pain Worsening during the COVID-19 Pandemic – Concomitant in Two Countries.” The study analyzed the surge in symptoms in Israel and Poland. Symptoms were -- and are -- on the rise worldwide.



Ann McCulloch

Temporomandibular Jaw (TMJ) Disorders have been all but invisible in the healthcare system, let alone accurately diagnosed. People have been dealing with various pain levels for years without answers or relief. Until now.

For those who suffer from the agony and frustration of head, neck, and jaw pain, particularly related to Temporomandibular Disorders (TMD), there has not been clear consensus among medical, dental and other clinical treatment options. It's no surprise for people who already suffer from TMD to continue to experience flareups, while others are experiencing painful changes for the first time. Symptoms include popping or temporary locking of the jaw, an inability to open the mouth wider than the normal range, and mild to severe pain and tenderness of the face, jaw, neck and head.

This treatment gap in care for TMD/TMJ has

been documented at the National Institute of Health (NIH) and National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. A comprehensive report on the lack of treatment options for sufferers was recently released. There may finally be help with the Speed2Treat Home Healing Kit – a simple, self-care program developed by San Diego-based Orofacial Therapeutics, LP.

“Speed2Treat is groundbreaking,” says Ann McCulloch, founding partner. “It establishes a protocol that can be followed by any healthcare provider to help a patient with an acute head, neck or jaw pain condition or flare-up. Until now, there wasn't sufficient



guidance from experts who are post-graduate trained in craniofacial care. The protocol for treating ankle sprain – RICE [rest, ice, compression, elevation] – is similar.

Speed2Treat can benefit most people who are experiencing a recent injury or flareup of TMJ, specifically musculoskeletal jaw and muscle sprain/strain (JAMSS), McCulloch says. The company’s four-week care plan is included in the kit, along with more than 20 online videos that address pain education, breath coaching and exercises that can help with significant relief and prevent progression to chronic pain.

“If patients dedicate time to focus on recovery and awareness of oral habits, they can self-manage their condition and may not need to pursue physical therapy or other measures,” McCulloch says.

The DIY Speed2Treat system includes two heat and cold packs, with a Neoprene wrap that adjusts to the head or neck. Orofacial Therapeutics developed a QuickSplint® so patients can create their own temporary mouth guard. The kit also provides specific

jaw exercises that can increase range of motion.

Users wear the QuickSplint while sleeping for the four-week period and do daytime exercises and alternate with the heat and cold packs. Online videos can also teach and reinforce proper breathing, posture, and tongue placement to help speed healing and reduce recurrences.

“The training videos and documents outline a self-directed program, including a symptom monitoring pain-tracker.” McCulloch says. “My partners are orofacial pain specialists and have outlined for users of the Home Healing Kit everything they need to use and follow for four weeks. A provider only needs to step in if the patient is experiencing no improvement in the first two weeks or is getting worse. Especially convenient during the COVID pandemic, providers can initiate care and monitor patient progress via telehealth consultation. We drop-ship the Speed2Treat Kit to the patient’s home.”

Treatment delay and inconsistency has been a main inhibitor to solving jaw sprain/strain and

Finally there is help for TMJ: The Speed2Treat Home Healing Kit developed by Orofacial Therapeutics, LP. Speed2Treat is groundbreaking. It establishes a protocol that can be followed by any healthcare provider to help a patient with an acute head, neck or jaw pain condition or flare-up. Until now, there wasn't sufficient guidance from experts.” — Ann McCulloch

musculoskeletal TMJ-related issues. According to the NIH/NASEM report, “Too long compartmentalized as a dental issue, both the clinical management of and research addressing TMDs need to implement a holistic and multidisciplinary approach. People with TMD symptoms often encounter health professionals across medicine, dentistry and beyond that are unfamiliar with TMDs and do not know where best to refer patients for further diagnosis and treatment. The divide between medical and dental care is currently vast in the United States and much of the world and is a divide that profoundly affects care systems, payment mechanisms, and professional education and training.”

Bridging the medical-dental divide with evidence-based treatment approaches to preventing chronic TMD pain is a high priority of the NIH/NASEM committee. Orofacial Therapeutics collaborates with dental and medical educators to train frontline medical and dental providers in how to address the management of acute jaw problems and identify risk factors for delayed recovery. Expert training is not required to deliver the Speed2Treat Home Healing Kit because the treatment is non-intrusive and integrated with patient education. If delivered immediately after the onset of pain, the Kit will improve rapid resolution of symptoms and prevent prolonged limitation of jaw function.

TMDs represent a specific group of conditions:

- Symptoms occur in the masticatory (i.e., chewing) system, which include this complex joint in the body, combined with an intricate neuromuscular apparatus that must be coordinated for healthy function-

ing.

- Fewer disability days than headaches or low back pain, suggesting that, despite comparable pain and psychological distress, people with TMDs may continue to function more than their counterparts with other pain conditions.
- No obvious physical changes for those suffering with a TMD. This may contribute to stigma and sufferers feel as if they must convince others of their symptoms and its impact on their lives.

In 2020, Orofacial Therapeutics announced a partnership with The TeleDentists® to help people in pain get on a path to healing quickly and affordably from initial low-cost consultation to follow-up care. The TeleDentists® proprietary national network of experienced, Board Licensed dentists are on-call and available round-the-clock to provide virtual dental consults via laptop, tablet, or smart phone. Urgent care providers, hospitals, employer networks, CIGNA and Anthem use The TeleDentists to provide urgent care telehealth access. Patients can arrange for a virtual consultation with The TeleDentists® and if appropriate, a Speed2Treat® Head, Neck & Jaw Pain Home Healing Kit will be recommended. It's an easy, affordable way for patients to address their condition from home.

“We are developing multiple treatments and protocols,” McCulloch says, “to educate and share with clinicians of all disciplines, including FaceMyPain that connects experts with patients who suffer from facial pain, headaches, TMJ and sleep disorders.” — By Susan Belknapp, California Business Journal

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