

Welcome to Eliminate TMJ Pain NOW, Session #1: Primary Movements of the Jaw

In this session you will learn some of the most important movement patterns for letting go of your TMJ pain and increasing the ease and comfort of the movements of your jaw. And as the muscles and joints of your jaw are interconnected and related to muscles in your neck, spine, face and other parts of yourself, you will find a pronounced effect on those areas, as well as a parasympathetic response that helps to increase your comfort and relaxation in general. You can find this response in nearly all sessions of this series if you choose to.

For this session, you will need a flat space to lie on your back. You may lie with your legs flat on the floor or have them bent so that your feet are flat on the floor. If for some reason you cannot lie on the floor, you can also do this session lying on a bed or while sitting in a chair. But please – if possible, do this session lying down the first few times. It will tend to give you much greater benefit.

Are you ready to begin? Please lie on your back, if that's comfortable for you. Have your arms and legs uncrossed. You may have your legs flat on the floor or you may want to bend your knees so that your feet are flat on the floor. Again, whatever is the most comfortable for you. It is your comfort that is important here. Have your arms on the floor at your sides.

Close your eyes and take a moment to notice your contact with the floor. You are closing your eyes, so that you can relax and notice what is happening now and the changes that will occur in this session.

First, just notice the weight of yourself on the floor. Notice your breathing. And take your attention from the very bottom of yourself – your toes and feet and heels, up to your calves, your thighs, your pelvis, your lower back, middle and upper back, your neck, your head, your jaw.

That's nice. Notice which parts of yourself are easy to contact, easy to notice, easy to feel. And are there some areas that seem fuzzy or less easy to contact?

(Pause)

Or not so much? Just notice. Don't try to change anything. Just notice.

Good. Now please take your attention to the area of your face around your jaw. Feel the sensations around that area. Your lower jaw, your upper, above your jaw, below your jaw, to the right and to the left of your jaws, your lips. Are your lips relaxed or are you tightening them somehow? And notice your tongue inside your mouth. Is it loose and relaxed or are you unconsciously pressing it against your teeth? Let your tongue relax.

Now, notice if you are clenching your teeth. Are your upper and lower teeth pressing against each other, or is there some space between them? Don't try to change it, just notice, it will change on it's own as you do these sessions.

And begin to make a very small movement of opening and closing your mouth. A small movement of opening and closing your mouth. Do less than you know that you can do. Less. Open your mouth, close it, and then stop for a brief second. And then repeat.

And notice as you do this movement – really notice – how smooth the movement is – where it feels more smooth or less smooth. Where it feels jerky or rough. Go slow. The movements could be as small as a thought...really...

Good.

Keep opening and closing your mouth, very gently. Stopping for a moment after each movement. Remember to keep breathing.

And as you keep doing the movement notice how you can make it easier and simpler. Where can you let go of effort and let go of tension? In order to make the movements smoother, find ways to relax and let go of effort as you continue to slowly open and close your mouth. Do that in whatever way that you do.

As you continue to open and close your mouth gently, do you notice any movements in your head? Does your head move, ever so slightly as, as you open and close your mouth?

If you can't tell, think of the area where your skull contacts the floor. And as you notice your head contacting the floor, feel if it moves as you open and close your mouth. What do you notice? If your head is moving it means that you are using the muscles in your neck. But you don't need to use the muscles in your neck to open your mouth.

So, see if you can stop using your neck muscles as you continue to open and close your mouth. You may need to make the movement of your mouth smaller. Got that? Open and close your mouth without moving your head.

(Pause)

Now let's try the opposite of that - tilt your head back as you open your mouth. Tilt your head back as you open your mouth. And then as you close your mouth, let your head return to its normal position.

Again, as you open your mouth, tilt your head back. As you close your mouth bring your head back to its normal position. Do that a few times, see how you can make it easier and simpler. Breathe as you do this. Take a moment and notice the rest of yourself as you do this. Notice the weight of your feet and legs, the weight of your arms, the weight of your spine from top to bottom.

Stop for a moment. Please stop. And wait until you are ready to breathe out. And as you breathe out open your mouth and tilt your head back. Then as you breathe in, close your mouth and bring your head back down. Very nice. Does doing the movement with your breath make it easier? Or perhaps not.

Whatever you feel or believe is fine.

Let go of thinking about the breath. Let go. And the next time that you open your mouth, imagine that you are starting the movement with your head. Imagine that you are starting the movement of opening your mouth, by moving the head. And that moving the head down initiates the movement of closing your mouth.

Does that make sense? Think that moving your head up and down causes the movement of your mouth opening and closing. And, as usual, relax as you do this, breath as you do this. Relax the tongue in your mouth.

Stop for a moment after each cycle. Go slow. You are not exercising or stretching, so don't do the movement like a robot. Do the movement like a child who is exploring and learning. Do it for your own comfort and your own learning. Good. Very, very nice.

And can you return for just a moment to the very first movement that we did – just open and close your mouth without moving your head. How does that movement seem? Is it easier? Simpler? Smoother? Bigger?

Rest. Good. Please stop everything and take a rest. Lower your legs if you have had them bent. Or if your legs have been straight the entire time, you can bend them for a bit. Whatever you do, just find a way to stop completely and rest and be with yourself and your experience.

As you rest, notice your contact with the floor. Do parts of your self seem different now? Are parts of your self more in contact with the floor? Or perhaps less?

Now let's try some more variations. Begin to very move your lower jaw a little to the right and then bring it back to the middle. Your lower jaw a little to the right and then back to the middle. Do that several times, stopping each time that you come back to the middle. Right and then back. Only move your jaw a comfortable amount. Noticing as you move the jaw what you can do to make the movement easier and simpler.

Let me ask you a question – how do you know that your jaw is actually moving to the right? Do you feel it in your imagination? Do you see it in your mind's eye? Let's also add another source of information. Take one of your fingers and lay it across your chin. And then once that finger is on your chin, feel your chin as it move right and back to the middle. Do that a few times, noticing how your jaw moves to the right, how far, how easily. Move very slowly so you can notice

subtle movements in your jaw. For example, notice whether your jaw moves in a direct line to the right or if it curves somehow. Notice if your mouth opens a little as you move to the right. Just notice.

Rest. Good. And please stop and please rest.

As you rest, notice your contact with the floor. Notice the weight of your head on the floor. Are you sinking into the floor more? And since we did a movement only on one side, notice the difference in sensation on the right side of your jaw and the left...and the left side of your face and the right, left cheek and right cheek. If you feel any differences do they extend elsewhere? For example, notice the weight of your left hand and right hand, left leg and right leg.

Now let's do the other side. Move your lower jaw a little to the left and then back to the middle. Do a small movement. Don't be ambitious. Left and back to the middle. Stay in contact with your jaw and yourself as you move. That's nice.

And again, place one of your fingers along the length of your chin so that you can follow the movement of the lower jaw as it moves to the left and back to the middle. Notice the length of the movement, the ease of the movement.

Of course, you are breathing as you do this, you are relaxing your tongue in your mouth, there is no need to squint or make facial expressions. Only use those parts of yourself that are necessary for this simple movement, allow everything else to rest. Good.

Rest. Please stop and please rest. Take a complete rest of yourself.

Let's do some more movements. Open your mouth a comfortable amount. And with your mouth still open, move your lower jaw to the right and then back to the middle. Your mouth is open as you move your lower jaw to the right and then back to the middle.

Do that several times. Stop for a brief moment after each movement so that each movement is distinct. You place one finger on your chin if you would like to get a clearer sense of how your jaw is moving to the right.

And with your mouth still open, move your lower jaw to the left and then back to the middle. You are moving your lower jaw to the left and then back to the middle. Do that a few more times focusing on ease and comfort. The less you do the more you learn. If you strain or stretch your brain can't focus on making the movement easier and simpler.

Now, can you go back and forth – to the left and then back to the middle, then continuing on to the right and then back to the middle and left again – back and forth.

Does the movement seem different on one side as opposed to the other? The human body is never completely symmetrical; there are always subtle and not so subtle differences between the sides. Do you notice something similar here? Does one side seem easier and the other more challenging? Or perhaps they seem equal and you don't notice anything in particular. That's fine too.

Good. Please stop and please rest. And as you rest take some time to notice your contact with the floor.

Now open your mouth again very slightly and, this time, bring your jaw a little bit forward and then back. Only your jaw – forward and back. Don't lift your head. Move only your jaw forward. On your back, forward means towards the ceiling above you. If you are sitting – forward would be toward the wall in front of you.

Forward and back to your resting or neutral position. Like you did before, you can put a finger on your chin so that you can feel it moving forward.

Stop after each movement.

Breath. Relax your face. Only go a comfortable amount. Do not strain. Do not stretch.

Notice whether your jaw moves forward and back in a straight line. Or if it veer a little to the right or left.

The next time that you move your jaw forward, notice whether your head tilts back a little. If it does so you are using your neck muscles. See if you can do the movement without your neck muscles. Can you isolate the movement of your jaw from the movement of your head? Why would you want to do that? Because many TMJ symptoms arise because of poor self use. They arise because your muscles are doing too much work and are involved in too much effort. The more you let that go, the better your functioning. The more your symptoms melt away.

Please stop and please rest. As you rest notice your contact with the floor, is anything changing in your contact with the floor? If parts of you feel heavier and more in contact with floor that's usually a sign that your muscles have relaxed and let go. The more they can do that, the more flexible they become.

Notice also, your jaw, upper and lower, your lips, and your face. What is happening in those areas? Do you feel something shifting, easing, and letting go? Or not yet?

Now open your mouth again, and bring your lower jaw forward a small distance – just a small comfortable amount where you can leave it for a moment. And stay in that position and move your jaw a small distance to the right, and then back to the middle. Do that several time.

To the right and then back to the middle. Rest whenever you want to.

And then go back to the movement. That is, bring your lower jaw forward a small distance and then move it a small distance to the right and back to the middle.

Rest. Good. Please stop and rest for just a moment. Just a quick rest.

And again, open your mouth a comfortable amount, bring your jaw forward a comfortable amount. Is that comfortable? Keep it there and this time slowly move your jaw a to the left and then back to the middle. To the left and then back to the middle.

Do this several times, each time noticing how you can make the movement easier and simpler. Each time finding a way to make the movement more pleasant. Then stop, rest and then go back to the movement.

Open your mouth gently, bring your lower jaw forward a little, keep it there and move your jaw very gently to the left and back to the middle.

And now lets combine the two movements. Move the jaw in both directions. Open your mouth - only as far as is easy - move your lower jaw forward – only as far as is easy. And slowly move your chin to the left and to the right. Moving side to side in a gentle, easy manner. Keeping your mouth open as you do so, and your jaw slightly forward.

Stop. Bring your mouth back to a neutral position. And then repeat. Opening your mouth, moving it forward and then left and right, finding how to make it a simple, clear movement that is easy and comfortable to do. You may want put a finger on your jaw so that you can clearly feel the movement.

Rest. Good. Please stop and please rest. Notice where your attention is drawn to as you rest. What do you notice?

And go back to the movement you did at the beginning – just open your mouth a tiny amount and move your jaw left and right. Does that movement seem easier now? Is it simpler?

Stop. Please stop. And then do the movement that you did at the very beginning. Just open and close your mouth. Is this easier and simpler? What do you notice?

Just do that once or twice and then stop.

And one last time, before you come to a sitting position and notice your changes in that relationship to gravity, just notice the sensations in your face and in your tongue and jaw and in your neck and shoulders, your legs and arms and anywhere else you notice something different.

Then roll to one side and sit up. While you sit, take a few seconds to feel whatever sense of changes that you have right now in your mouth and jaw and

related areas. Breathe. Just sit and get a sense of your own comfort. Can you gently open your mouth and then close it? Can you breath as you do that?

And then come to standing. And in standing notice the comfort of your jaw and face.

End note: You can repeat any of the lessons from this series anytime that you want to. You can try doing them in different positions, for example while sitting in a chair or on the floor. You can repeat the sessions and do only a portion of one if you choose. You may also want to experiment with when you do a session. For example, you can do one right before bed. If you have gotten pain symptoms at a certain time – say in the afternoon, try doing the session before then, so the symptoms never occur. You can actually make it so that your nervous system simple forgets to have any pain. Use these sessions in the way that is the best for you.